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Inter-communion with God

INTER-COMMUNION WITH GOD

By REV. M. P. TALLING, PH., D.

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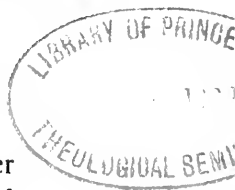
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Inter-Communion With God

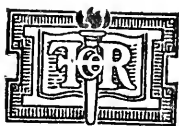
An exploration of Spiritual Power
as manifested in intercourse and
co-operation between God and man



BY THE REV.
MARSHALL P. TALLING, B. A. Ph. D.
Author of "Extempore Prayer"

ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται

SECOND EDITION



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*To My Wife
and her honoured mother
this book
is affectionately inscribed*

Preface

THE germinal thought of this book was conceived during the preparation of an earlier volume on the office of *Public Devotion*.¹ While "Extempore Prayer" was expressly designed to aid theological students and ministers in the discharge of a serious public office, the present work deals with communion as a private experience, and appeals to all classes who desire to understand God's contact with mankind.

As the term inter-communion is intended to signify more than is commonly supposed to be connoted by the word prayer, and involves an exercise of the soul not sufficiently cultivated, the reader is invited to become an explorer seeking deeper insight into his own experience, while investigating the operation of spiritual laws. Every thinker engaged—in science, in economics, in philosophy, in education—is endeavouring to extend the limits of his especial domain. The religious man alone does not regard himself as an investigator, yet the widest and highest and most important field in the realms of knowledge and power awaits exploration in the spiritual sphere.

The language of the present treatment was de-

¹ "Extempore Prayer—Its Principles, Preparation and Practice," Fourth Edition. Fleming H. Revell Company.

terminated chiefly by its purpose. Since the aim is to exhibit inherent relationships subsisting between spiritual and natural forces, it was necessary to adopt a terminology common to both orders of force. Accordingly, instead of treating communion in the ordinary language of religion, we shall speak of all influences whatsoever, whether in the spiritual, the mental, or the physical sphere as "forces." Should any reader, however, desire to see the author's presentation of our Lord's office, and of the Holy Spirit's work in communion, he is referred to "Extempore Prayer," *in loco*. Chapter seven of this book, too, briefly touches these themes. Also, it will be seen that in chapter nineteen an attempt is made to translate the term "spiritual forces" into the language of religion and of daily speech, so that what we know as faith, love, holiness, etc., and often regard as quite apart from those material forces, which are weaving about us the texture of external civilization, may be seen in their vital and moulding relation thereto.

By some readers chapter sixteen on "Communion in Sleep" may be deemed mystical. Though likely to be misunderstood by a certain class of readers, it may nevertheless be instrumental in adding new interest to sleep, and help to sanctify the night-watches, for another class of minds. Its mission is to attract attention to the one-third of our time which many have never supposed could, or ought to be devoted to spiritual uses.

To the thoughtful who hunger for truer conceptions and fuller explanation of spiritual experience,

these pages go forth with the hope that they may stimulate further investigation in this realm of highest thought and profoundest feeling ; involving as it must, issues of the supremest practical moment.

M. P. TALLING.

Toronto, February, 1905.

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PART ONE

The Relation of Spiritual to other Forces

“Man’s spirit dwells in an environment to which it is superior. It transcends the physical order, which yet is the medium through which its purpose and energy are displayed.”

I

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of these pages is to exhibit the place of prayer among the working forces of the world; to indicate the method of its operation; and to render its benefits more available for all who desire to share the mysterious Power of God.

But, like the title under which we are writing, the scope of our inquiry is broader than, to some readers, the above terms may imply. Aiming at an explanation of reciprocal intercourse, and of the application of Divine power to human interests, it will be seen that we are really exploring spiritual laws in their relation to the natural world. The ground here taken, however, in radical distinction, for example, from that of Professor Henry Drummond in "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," is that natural and spiritual forces are *not* identical; that natural forces cannot invade the spiritual realm; that nevertheless they are themselves swayed by spiritual power,—a domination which man shares with his Creator, and which involves spiritual communion, and co-operation, with God.

Properly understood indeed, the narrower theme implies all that is suggested by the wider statement. For is it not apparent that in so far as prayer produces results it must operate in one of three ways—

either by magic; or by miracle; or through its normal relation to other forces in the universe? If the first, it would be lawless and undivine. If wholly the second, it would be wholly supernatural and inexplicable. If in any sense the last, it will be to that extent capable of explanation and will rank as a force among forces. The only tenable ground is to discard magic, and to perceive in prayer exactly the same mystery that exists in man's own constitution.

He is in part spiritual, and in part natural, and his prayer like himself, possesses supernatural, and natural elements. But these operate as normally in his *communion* as in his existence. From man's complex composition and experience we learn that spiritual power is related to natural forces according to rational principles. But until some statement of these principles can be made in terms level to intelligence, one portion of mankind will remain skeptical about the power of prayer, and another portion will pray devoutly, without understanding profoundly. Both classes—those who doubt, and those who trust—desire to trace the working of prayer. And without controversy the loyalest hearts yearn most earnestly to sound the depths of its mysterious power.

While no hope need be entertained of removing all mystery, since it is always a *finite* creature that faces the Infinite, yet this essential truth must be clearly perceived, namely, that the finite partakes of the Infinite. Sharing God's nature, we know the spiritual from the inside; and if pure, apprehend it

truly. It is the "pure in heart" who see God. Since man is himself a *spirit* he has the intuition of God. And discovers in his own essential nature all the mystery of the supernatural. It is mystery, indeed, but it is mystery wherein he feels himself at home. Nothing that becomes part of man's experience can be more mysterious than himself. And surely full acquaintance with ourselves is desirable, nay, is essential. Furthermore reverence for Him who created us and is seeking by all Divine influences to occupy us for Himself, should encourage our research. The more religious a man is, the more hopeful he should be of perceiving God's method of indwelling power, and spiritual control.

Yet precisely at this point, delicacy will probably long be necessary; for, multitudes of honest people, if questioned on this subject would doubtless reply, in effect, that "Prayer is incapable of explanation, because essentially miraculous"; or that "Prayer has no orderly relation to natural forces at all, since its power depends upon being a direct interference with law." A few perhaps might even feel that "any explanation of prayer whatsoever, would destroy its beauty and dissipate its power."

If prayer were something arbitrary in the universe and its exercise entirely dissociated from man's mental and practical activity, such objections might have weight, and we would hesitate to disturb a devout conception that the subject is too sacred for human examination. But if communion with God is part of man's life, and the source of its power, giving quality and direction to all its over-

flow, then prayer holds a vital relation to all experience, and not only so, but to the extent that its guidance is valuable, to that same extent is it important that its influence should be understood, and its power appropriated.

At the very gateway of our investigation, however, we are met by a difficulty arising from the common dialect of devotion—a difficulty which unfortunately may not be easily removed. One of the differences between religion and science is that the language of the latter aims to be precise, and is quite freely modified in order that it may be kept exact; while the terminology of religion, perhaps because fixed by the daily speech of the people, continues more stable, and remains less exact. In the whole vocabulary of religion possibly no single word has caused more unconscious misunderstanding than the word “prayer.” If we read the literature of infidelity, or the discussion of “Answers to Prayer,” it will be seen that the word is generally interpreted in its narrowest meaning, rather than in its widest significance. To almost all minds “Prayer” suggests the idea of *petition*; yet petition is but a small part of what the word stands for.

According to its wider significance prayer includes besides petition, Adoration—the contemplation of what God is; Thanksgiving—or appreciation of what God gives us; Confession of sin and feelings of penitence; Self-dedication or vows; as well as Intercession, that is, prayer for others. Now the phrase “Communion with God” or briefly, “Communion” includes all these various attitudes of mind

and heart, in our approach to God; and it suggests what the idea of petition does not, that our coming to God is rather to commune with Him, than to ask for things. Moreover as will be seen, it implies that all this wealth of content represents but one side, and less than half of our intercourse with God. The Divine side of the experience involves the partaking of new life, grace, wisdom, pardon, peace, comfort and all that we can consciously *receive* from God. Consequently, were we more generally to adopt the word "communion" our very terminology would help men to see that prayer is verily a comprehensive inter-communion with God. It is possible, too, that the commoner use of the phrase "to commune with God" in place of "to pray to God" or "to offer up prayer" would tend to show that prayer is not a matter of words uttered, but an inner attitude, and movement of the spirit. It will be seen therefore as we proceed, that in these pages the conception of communion with The Unseen includes more than is usually associated with ideas of prayer, and also that our contact with God, if I may use that term, is more intimate, constant, vital and reciprocal than is commonly supposed.

The method of our treatment is governed by its supreme purpose. Accordingly universal forces must be first classified, in order that spiritual power may be assigned its intelligible rank and office. Again, it will be observed that while our chief theme is the transmission of spiritual power, and its application as a controlling force, considerable space is devoted to the enormous (perhaps to many alto-

gether astonishing) development which the race has undergone in its intercourse with God, and to the remarkable range and variety of growth possible to the individual. This widening, rising, varied series of developments affords multiform illustration of the predominant idea of our whole treatment—namely, that communion is a living inter-communion; that from the first it has become increasingly conscious; and that it ought yet further to be brought more fully to consciousness.

The movement of the Supreme Spirit upon the finite spirit must be recognized as part of our intercourse with God. This truth so frequently forgotten by worshippers and often omitted from books of devotion becomes the key to everything else. For all that satisfies human need, causing development and imparting power, comes from God to man, through communion, making communion, as the term connotes, a mutual act in which we *receive* from, and listen to God, as well as speak to, and hunger for Him.

One side of this truth enjoys general recognition. The other side is not only neglected, but is often so far doubted, that many never expect God to commune with them otherwise than through His Written Word, nor to make His coming upon them a conscious experience. From this position we must be rescued, if God is to exercise power through us. Pentecost, instead of being the spirit-miracle provided for all believers, would thus be regarded as a past event or as the special privilege of a select few. Unconsciously, this misconception widely

presents its cold affront to the highest and last gift bestowed by our blessed Lord. Every age has been spiritually crippled by it, but none so inexcusably as the present. How far it is removed from Christ's ideal of the Spirit's dispensation may be felt, if we consider how very far it is removed from the ideal of Moses, in the dim dispensation of symbols. Eldad and Medad, it will be remembered caused consternation in the Israelitish camp by what was deemed their presumption in prophesying. Even the youthful Joshua was shocked, and called upon Moses to "forbid them." This mistaken zeal however met kindly reproof in a declaration of the Divine ideal. "*Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets*, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them" (Num. 11: 29).

What however was *wished* by Moses, was *prophe-sied* by Joel, *promised* by Jesus (Luke 24: 49, Acts 1: 4) and in the fulness of time actually *conferred* by the Holy Spirit. Indeed this fourfold revelation sets forth but a growing manifestation of the Spirit's mission. In the treatment of every other subject repetition has been avoided (so far as possible); in this alone it has been deliberately adopted as the only means of doing justice to a neglected truth.

In certain places it will be observed we have spoken of spiritual forces as though they were impersonal. Although the motive for this will appear clearly enough in the sequel it may be well to assign one or two reasons for so doing. First, because the relation between spiritual and natural forces is not clearly conceived nor its importance

appreciated. And secondly, because so many have inadequate conceptions of the nature and power of personality. How inadequate it is to think of our relation to God as limited to narrowly conceived communion, such as speech and voluntary association, will the more readily appear when we reflect that even between men there is not only intercourse by speech and volition, but also the play of unseen involuntary forces, gravitational, magnetic, sympathetic, congenial, repulsive, helpful, harmful, moral, spiritual.

True, these are not well known nor easily traced between man and man. But worse, they are less known though more easily traced between God and man. It is because in the human individual all types of force—physical, psychic and spiritual—meet and harmoniously operate, that therefore human personality stands as a working model or example of the relationship between spiritual and all other forces. Unless however this relation be stated in terms of force, men will not perceive how heavenly power is controlling world-forces; how the Divine will moves the world-muscles. Yet it is important that Christians should discern how the spiritual lever which moves the world is applied.

To view religion apart from world-movements is to miss its wide significance. To regard spiritual forces, because different in kind from natural forces, as quite divorced from them, is to ignore their vital and redeeming influence. The world is God's workshop. The minds, the hearts, the hands of men constitute an important part of the machinery for

the performing of His task. When God wishes to put His hand upon a nation He can do it through earthquake, flood, famine or pestilence, because He governs natural forces. Or He can (following His ordinary method) do it through a man, or many men, as He did in Egypt through Joseph and Moses, as He did upon the nations through Israel, as He did upon the whole world through Jesus Christ and His disciples. What the world needs to realize is the dominant place held by spiritual forces. Any method that will make this plain to our thinking is worth adopting.

II

THE GREATEST FORCE IN THE UNIVERSE

MEN have always lived in the presence of forces divinely provided for their benefit, but which, because unknown or but little understood, have been but partially used. This still remains true. Nevertheless even man's fragmentary knowledge has enabled him to make large conquest of the world and of himself.

Slowly, very slowly, has he availed himself of the power of gravitation. But at present, as never before, he is inviting flowing rivers and reversing tides to lend him assistance. Every mountain stream is now seen to be a giant-in-waiting to contribute something for the happiness of pigmy man. Of steam and electricity, of chemistry and light, similar stories might be told, with tenfold more of marvel and of mystery. Science tiptoes on the utmost limits of advance, in this—the miracle-crowned epoch of the ages—and feels she has but touched the hem of nature's garment.

But if this be true of the physical forces about us, it is transcendently truer of those higher forces which envelop us. The pall that rests upon the world—and the only deathly pall is its *intellectual* and *spiritual* darkness. What can touch the heart with a deeper pathos than the contemplation of those long centuries in which the whole race was

subject to superstition—the victims of ignorance as pathetic as it was universal. Still, indeed, are all barbarous and pagan peoples victims of innumerable delusions, painful, false and cruel—the fruit of ignorance.

In the realm of religion even darker and more heartrending has been the blood-curdling cruelty which has stained the progress of the race. The annals of history drip with crimson and exhale the mists of religious passion, rich in earnestness, noble in purpose, but sadly undeveloped, awfully misdirected, and all because spiritual light had not yet dawned. Man had a “zeal of God but not according to knowledge.” Our race can no longer plead ignorance. But the very light which reveals the magnitude of the mission imposed upon us, by our nature and place in the universe, reveals our need of power. What *might* be done is not done. What *ought* to be done is but feebly attempted, and all because power readily available is not freely applied. That such Power exists no one doubts any more than he doubts the reality of electricity; yet no one can carefully consider the matter without arriving at the conclusion that its relation to other forces is not clearly discerned nor is its method of application well understood.

If indeed the notion commonly prevails that spiritual affairs have very little to do with the material forces of the universe, religious people are themselves chiefly responsible therefor. Explorers in other fields reduce the world to related forces. But the religious man scarcely deems himself an

investigator, and often values his spiritual life as a matter apart. He makes little effort to fix its place, or to measure its influence among other forces, and even when he does so, rarely does it in terms of force. Yet the connection is unmistakable; and capable of as definite statement as any law which involves personal elements.

In terms of force the relation may be presented something after this fashion. In ascending series the forces of the universe may be ranked as material, vital, mental, moral and spiritual. Not only are spiritual forces highest, but all-controlling. Lower forces operate in a limited zone. The spiritual exercise an absolutely all-pervasive sway. Material force, gravitation, for example, operates in the physical realm, not in the mental, nor in the spiritual. Its influence is confined to material substance. But from the other side intelligence utilizes gravitation and all kindred forces, setting them toilsome tasks. There are other steps in the series, however. For the intelligence which governs natural forces is itself subject to moral, and moral to spiritual control. The spiritual ladder runs from top to bottom. The material ladder rises only as high as the dust. Spiritual forces supervene upon the entire series or orders of force and by virtue of native supremacy, are pressing, weaving, bending non-moral and even immoral forces into the Divine ministry. Ruling or overruling they press straight forward to the goal of the race the completion of the universe. Let us run the scales for a moment to make this unmistakably clear.

Through spiritual forces God governs men; and men make empires, history, civilization. Or reversing the order, natural laws are controlled by men; men are controlled by ethical laws; ethical laws but indicate the direction in which spiritual forces tend. Or changing the terms, God's purpose is the redemption and elevation of the race. For this object the machinery, and politics of earth, are enlisted and swayed by Him who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," and who effects His purposes by working in men to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

Put it how you may, scientifically, philosophically or religiously, the immutable truth awaiting recognition is that the highest, greatest, only dominant force in the universe is spiritual. All the forces; moral, intellectual and physical have their tasks Divinely assigned and are held direct to His purpose by this controlling influence. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," saith the Lord of Hosts." God is organizing Himself to Humanity, pouring His spirit through men upon their activities. On its human side this inter-communion is known imperfectly as prayer; on its Divine side partially as grace. Distinguishable indeed from God, as His power communicated, "it is God that worketh in you," imparting His own spirit to a being already designed for intelligent and active co-operation with Him, in the execution of the Divine Will.

III

FUNCTION OF NEED IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

IN two respects the significance of human need is not sufficiently appreciated, nor its relation to God's purpose properly conceived. In the first place it holds man in constant contact with God, and is the means to all that men can become here or hereafter. In the second place human need is the channel for transmission, and the point of application, of divine power. On the one hand it has subjective worth, on the other objective meaning. Both points are important.

I. To commence with the first. In man himself is found a key to the method of his communion. His need is an index at once to his nature, and to the character of the supply he requires. Whatever our previous conceptions, nothing must be permitted to obscure the truth that there are no arbitrary elements in the relationship subsisting between human beings and the Source of all being. It is an economy wherein heart hunger is its own voice, crying in its own language, for the very satisfaction without which its destiny cannot be completed. It may be indefinite and "inexpressible" (as all our deeper yearnings must ever be) yet its existence is its prayer, and its filling or satisfaction renders it an intercourse.

We shall never understand our communion with

God till we perceive that *need* is a fundamental fact of human experience; and that man was intended for intercourse by being created a hunger-point in the universe—a conscious centre of continuous need. His very existence is want, and it can persist only as it is satisfied. By constituting man needful, and responsive, God made communion an essential principle of his being. It may wound his vanity, and must deepen his piety, to realize that by nature he is the personification of need—the embodiment of hunger. Yet this very fact gives him his place in the universe, and constitutes his means to happiness. In an empty universe he could not continue. But as it is, he finds his need a lasting hunger for an inexhaustible good. Where the feast is spread, appetite is blessing; thirst a benediction, where the streams flow pure. Need, which would be pain in the presence of famine, constitutes true blessedness in the face of endless satisfaction. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst”—always blessed—and blessed in proportion to their hunger—“for they shall be filled.”

The terms here employed are wide enough, it will be seen, to include man’s physical, and mental, as well as his religious and æsthetic life. The same being who is sufficiently responsive to stand arrested by “the still small voice of the level twilight” requires oxygen for his daily life. Living is a process of communion—as much for the body as for the mind. In neither case is it wholly a conscious experience. If therefore we confine our attention to the central stream of spiritual communion, and in-

quire how much of it comes to consciousness, it can only be answered that that depends in part upon the stage of development of the individual, and in part upon his own volition; God's manifest intention embodied in the nature of man and declared by Holy Writ being, that the creature should be filled with all the fullness of the Creator. He is endowed with intelligence that he may know his needs; and, dowered with volition, he is free to determine his attitude towards the manifold influences of the Eternal. While in the flesh we can be conscious of only part of our contact with God. But this is plain that much of our communion is direct and instantaneous and very largely independent of words. Its voluntary content and to some extent its direction are evidently determined by thought, but in itself it is much more than intellectual. Vital and emotional elements must always overflow the current of exact thinking. God's descent into a man's being suffuses his whole nature with light and feeling. As an interflow it cannot be construed in terms of thought, for thought at best is but one of its factors. At heart it must be an interchange of life, an experience in which His life is first communicated to us, and then,

"We give Him back the life we owe,
That in His ocean depths its flow,
May richer, fuller be."

The beautiful sentiment just quoted, or rather adapted, from Dr. George Matheson, implies however one condition not universally present in human

experience, that is, a will at one with God's. Were it not for this one element (and man's perversion will be considered in the next chapter) *need* could be translated into terms of prayer, since we then should desire only what we need; also our desire would be God's desire; and our will identical with His.

In so far as need is *felt* (and always very much further) it is a "tongue of pleading" to the Unseen Father. Yet were we to acknowledge as prayer, only that portion of it which finds human expression, still would it be seen that right at the heart of God's government prayer is lodged as a potency. Man is not only commanded to pray but he is so created that he does it. And does it instinctively. And does much more of it than he is conscious of doing; because he is more true to his nature, than enlightened about his inner feelings; and because whenever or wherever a human being *prays* at all, ten thousand times his *conscious* power is rising in supplication for all his nature needs. Prayer possesses inherent power; it is always a benefit, always an uplift. It is always doing more in the world than can be dreamed of in our philosophy; because philosophy is limited, while the whole universe of unseen forces tends towards His sovereign will, awaiting man's fuller discovery and completer application. The instinct to pray is sound. Barbarous or civilized, pagan or Christian, catch a man at his best and he is in prayer.

Not the superstition of pagans, nor the ignorance of Christians, nor the perversion of both, should be

permitted to obscure its meaning nor hide its power. "It has," says Austin Phelps, "and God has *determined* that it should have a positive and appreciable influence in directing the course of human life. It is, and God has *purposed* that it should be, a link of connection between human mind and Divine mind, by which through His infinite condescension we may move His will."

Whether we "search the Scriptures" or "study history" or trust the heart's native impulse, the same conclusion is reached. Prayer is a definite, unique, elemental power in the universe, intended for all and available by all. For this reason every individual has it laid upon him to enter into his spiritual inheritance, to explore its riches to the utmost, and to magnify his endowments by bringing potential resources into actualized power, for God's glory and the world's betterment.

We said a moment ago that were it not for one element (sin) all our needs could be construed as "prayer." This over-statement must be modified. For not only is man wrongly willful, but he is also inert and immature. Even when he is "right with God" he is not always, perhaps, never fully alive with desire. God has to overcome his *inertia* as well as his perversion. Austin Phelps expressed but part of the truth when he wrote, "We offer many dead prayers through *mental indolence*." There is the deeper fact of native human impotence. It can see the glory from afar, yet stumblingly and lamely it "follows the gleam." Is it not true that aspiring souls more than the sluggish and indifferent are sen-

sible of their impotence? Ideals are receding allurements—a fact that implies immortality. The higher we rise the higher we are capable of rising. Because ideals are forces which tend to incarnate themselves. They would be useless else. Nay! worse, would drive us to despair. Victor Hugo was reverent even if daring when he said in his forceful way, “It is necessary that the ideal should be breatheable, drinkable and eatable to the human mind. It is the ideal which has the right to say, ‘Take, this is my body, this is my blood.’”

II. Another principle, however, is involved in human need, namely, the fact that it constitutes a point of application, and a channel for the transmission of Divine power. Although this is a truth of supreme moment, and its significance must not be lost sight of, if we are to apprehend the place of inter-communion in the Divine economy, yet its treatment requires scarcely more than a simple statement. Whatsoever the individual needs to make him wise and good and powerful, society requires to make it pure and useful and of good report. The need of the individual represents the need of the world. From the standpoint of society this need may seem vague and indistinct, but in the experience of the individual it exists as a personal hunger. In this manner all the glowing ideals of God have been descried by seer and prophet, and have been rendered definite and given expression. Always has human destiny hovered before the race mysterious and indefinite, yet stage by stage as it could be attained, each new want came to an individual as

both definite and attainable. Thus through the gate of alert souls God has ever entered society. Herein is discovered the significance of personality. It exists not for itself; but as an agent of the Lord, as a force in the universe, as a ministering spirit whose destiny means something to the universe. All gifts are for service. Our Lord Himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. "No man liveth unto himself," and (oh! pathetic and terrible responsibility) "no man dieth unto himself." Every individual is a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. Responsive souls, true to their being, not only enjoy the life "more abundant" but become definite points amidst the world's sin and inertia for the application of Divine power. In Scriptural language they are "vessels unto honour, meet for the Master's use." History is full of examples of special "vessels" through whom God has been pleased to pour His tides of blessing upon mankind, but in accepting this fundamental truth it helps us to appreciate the Infinite Wisdom which makes the *needs* of men flood-gates into the world. Also it gives new significance to need. "For when I am weak, then am I strong." "Power belongeth unto God." Man is merely a channel. But his *desire* draws that power upon him, and he discovers to his delightful surprise, and increasing gratitude, that Divine power is made "perfect" in his "weakness."

I believe we misconceive the very purpose of "communion" in God's economy, until we feel that we are created to take part in the counsels of heaven,

for the control of earth. This is the saint's glorious privilege; not to "work" in a vineyard under a task-master; but to associate in sympathetic cooperation. To this end God puts His spirit into our hearts; moving us to feel an interest in His plans, and so calling forth our desires regarding His purpose, that within the limits of His Sovereign will, we do co-operate in planning, as well as in effecting, the work. Hesitate not to believe it, fail not to test it; the personal preference of God's co-labourers on earth have a place in furthering the kingdom, and tend towards God's ultimate purpose. He who has endowed each individual with peculiar gifts and preferences, also grants scope for his thinking; freedom for his feelings; and admits him to consultation regarding his part in the worship, and work of the Lord. The real power of prayer has scarcely yet dawned upon the world. The real miracles of the Christian dispensation are yet to be worked. "And greater things than these shall ye do because I go to My Father."

IV

THE THREE PHASES OF COMMUNION

PART of the human need of which we have been speaking—the part most emphasized in Christian preaching—arises from the fact of sin. “Part,” we have said, not all of it. For were men as sinless as their Saviour, they would still have needs as varied and as comprehensive as their manifold life. They would still be capable of (and would require) development. Like Jesus, they too could increase in wisdom and stature and “in favour with God,” as well as with “man” (Luke 2: 52).

The bearing of this fact upon communion with God seems not to be fully recognized. Yet it is plain that human prayer-experience has been broken into broad divisions and forced into different types, by the intrusion of abnormal and separative elements. No disaster, of course, can wrench men out of the universe, nor entirely sever their relation with its Supreme Head. But man’s first sin, and every added enormity, has affected his feelings towards God and has increased his need of God; has changed his condition, and altered the nature of the service he requires from God; in short, has greatly modified the character, and mightily enlarged the scope of all subsequent communion. Thus it is seen, that religion did not appear with sin, and is not confined to the redemption of the sinner. It is

something larger. It existed before sin arose, and will continue after sin is extinguished. The heart of religion—in Eden, in the world, and in heaven—is a conscious developmental intercourse with God.

The deadliness of sin is seen in its blighting of this communion and its destruction of the life process. To appreciate either the nature of death, or the measure of its disaster, one would need to comprehend the range and the possibilities of life eternal. As a matter of fact we can do neither. But we can perceive that *death is as manifold* as the life it destroys. Also that sin must be of various orders, corresponding to the order of death it inflicts.

Much distortion in our theology arises from the habit of thinking of sin in moral terms, and of death in physical terms. Bodily death is entirely inadequate to parallel moral sin, and though often hastened and aggravated by moral guilt, it in no sense corresponds thereto. Science reveals that the physical frame is at best temporal, and supports Scripture in saying that "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Also we learn from geological remains that physical death long antedated the advent of man, and therefore the possibility of moral death. Again,—the Scriptures show that not physical death, but moral death ensued upon man's first transgression. The declared law of penalty "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was actually fulfilled. Not in bodily decease, but in the consciousness of moral crash. The man and the woman still continued living. Indeed, that was necessary to the experience of moral separation, and

the dread feelings of shame and misery which came upon them. Observe, the death which follows mental, moral, and spiritual sin is not the destruction of consciousness which we associate with corporeal dissolution. It is living death—a continued perverted existence whose “worm dieth not,” a life wretched by inner distortion, by self-condemnation, and horrible in proportion to its separation from—truth, from life, from God.

Our age dreads physical death too much. Not that it adequately protects health, but that it clothes bodily dissolution with irrational horror. In the fields of science and of philosophy also, men have come to dread, even unto abhorrence, the mental wrong which works death, *i. e.*, confusion, bias and misleading issues—in our thinking. Against *moral wrong*, again, as displayed by overt acts, society presents an organized front, legislative, protective, punitive, administrative; and so far ranks itself with God. But against *moral death* multitudes of individuals have much less than a wholesome dread. Yet intercourse with God is affected not by wrong acts only but by wrong feelings. If now it be seen that sin causes spiritual death—that is, moral perversion, badness of disposition, an attitude of resentment towards truth, and of evil towards men, then it will be perceived what kind of re-creation is necessary to new life. Once you discern the kind of separation from God which sin effects, you will apprehend the kind of office or nature of operation necessary to overcome it and reinstitute At-one-ment with God.

Coming back therefore to our theme, it will be observed that there was no difficulty about communion before sin occurred to sunder the feelings of Friendship. Also, that were sin removed there would be no interruption. Also that the only imperfect communion we have is that which accompanies the process of restitution in God. Let this be clear. However close heart-contact with the Father may be here, it is only when "the mists have rolled away" and our partial knowledge ends, that the perfection of an uninterrupted spiritual communion can begin. No life shall be satisfied till it "awakes with His likeness." Accordingly holding close to the Bible we can say with all confidence that human prayer-experience presents three distinct phases —

- I. The communion of innocence.
- II. Communion of sinners during the process of salvation.
- III. Communion of the saints in light.

Of course this volume is devoted almost wholly to a consideration of the second phase, *i. e.*, the communion of sinners in preparation for the more perfect intercourse of the sanctified. But because the contrast will aid our study let us in this chapter briefly glance at some characteristics of the other two phases.

First, the Communion of Innocence—Human communion with God commences in a state of innocence. Unsullied by the sense of sin, our first parents stood unabashed before their Maker. This intercourse partook of the nature of a divine friend-

ship, undarkened by a single cloud. Sharing God's life they were His children. His tenderness inspired their confidence. Their love responded to His. While the sense of His greatness and of their dependence elicited gratitude, reverence and adoration. The nearest approach to perfect Edenic communion is undoubtedly the experience of childhood. By heredity we bear racial taint, and the peculiar bias of our nearer ancestry. In theological language, all are the victims of original sin. Yet children commence life with an innocence that faces the world and man and God untroubled. Naturally children love God and feel that He is their friend. Universally, where there is no perversion by older heads, this is the case.

But we can remember, at least I fear most of us can, a day when some sin of sufficient magnitude was committed to plunge us into the sense of guilt; when a darkness came which made us feel that forever our state of innocence was past. Our Eden was closed behind us. Sin had left its stain. We became conscious of the Divine displeasure. Conscience arose with condemning wrath. And *confession* when it came at all entered our prayers with an awful significance. This experience may not be clear to all, but this description is sufficiently accurate to indicate the distinction between a child's sense of innocence and friendship with God, and the confusion which accompanies his first great transgression. All subsequent prayer will belong perforce to a different class (No. II) because of the consciousness of guilt which hitherto had not troublesomely arisen.

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Next, let us consider The Communion of the saints in light. Not with too much confidence may we speak regarding communion in heaven, but these statements may be ventured.

1. It will be sinless. The ransomed throng no longer feel guilt, nor condemnation. Remorse is past, and confession absent from worship there.

2. A life redeemed from sin must be different from a merely innocent life. It has tasted the bitterness, known the struggle, felt the pangs of death. The experience of pardon, effort, hope; the rising power of virtue; the growing of sanctification by which men are transformed to His image; all this and more, must develop our being, must enlarge the scope of our knowledge, must kindle the flagless fires of our gratitude and impart to adoration a new element. There must be a zest in the worship of the redeemed in glory, who have come up out of great tribulation, unknown to the songs of angels or of children.

3. In our present prayer (as we have seen in Chapter III) there is an element of mystery transcending present knowledge. It is *felt* in experience. Its presence also is proved by answers to prayer, though we cannot trace its working. Therefore we feel safe in the assurance that our future communion with God will transcend our present by new powers and mystery undreamed of. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Yet let us continue the passage and we shall learn the key to the heavenly communion,

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“but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.”

Our communion therefore will be like His. Now what our Lord's communion really was like, is so plainly revealed, and yet so wonderful when compared with ours, that we must stay a moment in devout contemplation of His prayer-experience, who is our Exemplar, and whom we adore as Lord over all blessed forevermore.

THE PRAYER-LIFE OF OUR LORD

As the Son of God, our Redeemer held a unique relationship to the Eternal Father. This, and the fact of His sinlessness might lead us to suppose that He would have no need of prayer. Had He not “all power”? Was He not the Word “in the beginning with God”? Were not “all things made by Him”? Then why should He pray? Again, as one of the Persons of the Godhead would it not seem unnecessary that He should pray? Though He be high and lifted up above all thrones and principalities, the Creator of the sons of men, yet He not only held communion with God, but found strength and joy and preparation for His redemptive work through spiritual intercourse with Omnipotence. Not ours to understand all things nor to know the mysteries of the Godhead, but we may observe that the Son felt dependence on the Father. Jesus said, “I came not to do Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me.” The climax of His Gethsemane agony is marked by this prayer of self-surrender, “Not My will but Thine be

done." Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience, and was made perfect as the Captain of our Salvation, through suffering. Like all the sons of men He was subject to the Father, and by service and sacrifice, prayer and surrender, spent Himself for God's glory even unto crucifixion. In these things God spared not His own son. In these things still He spares not His own Sons, but makes a path through useful tribulation to the attainment of Christlike perfection. Yet unlike us, Christ's pre-existent intercourse with the Father, His self-deliverance for Incarnation and the redemptive work, His sinless oneness with God, and His eternal consciousness of His divine destiny, were all on a plane higher than our imperfect existence places us. Where He saw with perfect vision we must walk by faith. Where He knew the certain future, we must cling with hope. Where all was transparent to Him, we see through a glass but darkly. Nevertheless though on a plane infinitely high compared with our low estate, yet Jesus constantly communed with the Father. There is something instructive in this fact for us who ought by so much the more to feel our need for unceasing communion with God. Who can tell but that some such argument as this may have impressed to deeper depths the marvel with which the disciples contemplated His power and listened to His prayer?

In four respects the communion of Jesus lights the present way, and discloses the future glory for us.

- I. The prayer-experience of our Lord attests the

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fact that the pure and undefiled have need of communion with God. Moreover Christ's passion for prayer imposes upon us the belief that perfect intercourse with the eternal is possible only to the sinless. Also that as we grow in sanctification the blessedness which constitutes "heaven" becomes increasingly ours through nearer communion.

II. Another thing, I think was made clear by our Lord's transfiguration. Saints in glory, Moses and Elijah and others, as well as the angels there, take an interest in the world's redemptive process. Not always do we know the trend of Jesus' thought in prayer, but here for once the light comes upon us. He communes with God, and the heavenly visitants, regarding "His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." All this suggests that the glorified know what progress the redemptive work is making on earth; that it constitutes a subject of their intercourse; and that they have some part in its ministry.

III. That the guilt of the sinful deeply affects the communion of the sinless. No one can enter into the experience of Jesus without feeling that it was the dire mental and moral and spiritual death (as well as their physical distresses) that drove Him to the anguish of intercessory prayer. His Calvary was approached through *Gethsemane*, making the word synonymous with the agony of prayer. In most literal terms He poured out His soul unto death. So that subsequent crucifixion had no additional, if equal pain. "His soul was crucified more than His body." To the last moment on that

cross which bore our salvation He was praying. The Ghost was yielded up with the supplication, "Father receive My Spirit." If so He prayed who was sinless—how should we pray who are sinful?

IV. But another light falls upon us from our Saviour's example that must needs receive mention here: that was His joy of communion. His prayer had a deep and secret mystery which His disciples detected and longed to possess. The transfiguration effulgence wrought some visible hint of its glory. His tones in vocal prayer conveyed to the ear some suggestion of its joy, but for us who are more distant from the Father we must wait and "watch unto prayer" before we can enter that heavenly experience. Yet that, among the things that do not yet appear, constitutes part of our "inheritance undefiled that fadeth not away prepared in heaven for us."

We have only to remember our Lord's perfect humanity to understand why He prayed as He did; but we have to conceive His true divinity to imagine what this communion was like, or what ours shall be, when we awake in His likeness and are at last satisfied because we are like Him.

Now we turn to humanity's great problem, How can a sinner enter into, and develop, his communion with God?

PART TWO

Stages of Development in the Prayer- experience of the Race ; and of the In- dividual.

“The Personal Spirit communes with us through manifestations of His inner life ; and when He consciously and purposely makes us feel what His mind is, then we feel Himself.”—*Hermann, p. 143.*

V

DEVELOPMENT OF MAN INVOLVES DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNION

IN order to preserve coherence in our thinking, and directness in our purpose, it may be well at this point to "take bearings" by a brief recapitulation.

We have shown that the universe is a sensitive and inter-related unity of forces. These being ranged in hierarchical order, are lawful in their operation; the lower always subject to the higher, and all subject to the Immanent Supreme spirit. Amidst this complex of varied forces, and vitally inter-related therewith man holds relation, on one side with God, and on the other with the environing universe. His will can modify His relation in both directions. Again, His feelings and intelligence are modified from both directions. That is, man's spirit holds *conscious* and *volitional* contact with a spirit-dominated universe. We know not how human will controls human muscles. But it does. We know not how the human will reacts upon the Divine will. But it does. As Tennyson says—"Our wills are ours we know not how." Personality is free, and individual, yet not isolated. Its contact and communion are as natural and as comprehensive as its being. Consequently, man's intercourse with his Maker must be much wider than the term "prayer" is generally conceived to connote. And is a much more vital fact.

Again, it was shown that human need for communion is the fundamental fact of existence. Existence is *need*. Nothing but *need*. Need as manifold as life; as great as the possibilities of Eternity; and as ceaseless as it is eternal. Also man's need by his very constitution becomes the channel of Divine power, the gate of entrance and the point of application of all that God is doing for the race. This further fact was noted, that sin's invasion and its conquest were instrumental in breaking human communion into three phases, two of these—the narrow intercourse of unenlightened Innocence, and the uninterrupted felicity of Glory—have already been treated. The third still lies before us and constitutes the problem of this work, namely, the means whereby God instituted and is perfecting communion between Himself and creatures conscious of sin.

If we would conceive at all clearly the condition in which our early ancestors found themselves, we must perceive that a double task had to be performed. In order to perfect Communion, God had to overcome (1) Human perversion, and (2) Human immaturity. The first was a work of redemption. The second a process of expanding native capacities. The former problem is commonly recognized and duly emphasized in Christian preaching. The latter problem has never been fully realized, nor its importance sufficiently insisted upon. What man needs, and assuredly what God desires for him, is complete development. But such a purpose in-

cludes more than the saving of the soul, it involves the bringing of the whole man up to the use and enjoyment of his entire capabilities. And this is largely a matter of education. Not of course an education independently of God. That would be impossible. For God is the chief power in all true development. The word "Education" connotes the drawing out to normal life of that which is potential within, and is as divine as salvation. Both operations require God's working from within. In both processes higher orders of human spirits can, and do, help from without. Yet the distinction between these operations is generic, and it is a matter of capital importance to recognize this fact. When, for example Professor Coe in his excellent work "The Religion of a Mature Mind," uses the phrase "salvation by education," I think he confuses these two principles. Education is a development of normal faculties. Salvation is redemption from abnormal conditions. There is radical difference between developing a sound mind by education, and treating an unsound mind for dementia. It is one thing to satisfy a healthy stomach with food, and another to cure it of cancer. Before he sinned, man had one kind of need, afterwards two. But his rescue from sin leaves still his normal and never ceasing need of development.

Now it is difficult for us to conceive the immature conditions of primitive man, or the immensity of the task involved in his enlightenment. Both the revelation of Scripture, and the teaching of evolution, attest that men had existence (how long we know

not) before they came to consciousness of the fact that they were moral beings. Dowered with the capacity to suffer, and to achieve, all that they have since become, they lived together unconscious of moral distinctions. Without sin, they knew nothing of moral evil. Like children, they enjoyed the sense of at-home-ness in the world but were wholly unaware of the possibilities of life. Naked to the seasons, they had no dwelling but the open air. Feeding on herbs and natural fruits, we find them (after they came to moral consciousness) clothed with the leaves of plants or the skins of animals. They commenced existence in an empty world. No tools, no alphabet, no figures, no schools, no music, no art, they had neither geology nor psychology. Only slowly could they come to consciousness of their need of these things. Only as they succeeded in the founding of mathematics and logic, music and art, could their faculties be developed. They had everything to learn, to make, to discover. The most beautiful glimpse revealed of their beginning was the sense they possessed of relationship to God. They were conscious of spiritual communion, when the Lord God came down in the cool (literally in the wind) of the day. Before however they could have any true conception of God it was necessary for them to become "like God" (Gen. 3:22) by knowing moral distinctions. Before they could have an adequate conception of God it was necessary for them to attain a knowledge of themselves, and of the universe. This process is as yet incomplete. After untold centuries

of slow advance we realize how imperfect have been human ideas, both of God and the universe, and have scarcely yet begun to conceive the magnitude of the problem which confronted man at his creation.

Now, whether we speak of this age-long process as an evolution, a development, or a growth, we must recognize its twofold nature, its divine and its human elements. God and man are engaged in mutual effort. The Infinite is operating within and upon the finite from one side. On the other side His untutored "children" are "feeling after God"; sometimes seeking Him most earnestly; often attempting sedulously to shun Him; but gradually maturing to higher powers and clearer conceptions. Furthermore, it is of capital importance to discern two things. First, the *significance* of the process; and second, the laws which govern its development.

1. *The significance of growth.*

Whatever attitude individuals may hold to the theory of evolution, or whatever their acquaintance with psychology, it must nevertheless be manifest that no preceding age has been in a position to appreciate, as our age can, the significance of growth, or the immeasurable possibilities of development. What telescope and microscope have done for the eye, and what revelation has done for faith, evolutionary and educational theories are doing for the mind—enlarging the sweep of our vision, and widening the scope of our experience. A sense of the range of past experience carries

irresistibly forward, contributing impressive evidence upon the doctrine of immortality. If development, beginning with simplicity, can proceed by orderly stages to such complexity, beauty, and power in the natural life, what development may not be expected in the future life? The significance of growth rests in the fact that it is God's method of producing higher and wider experience, a progressive living, which results in temporal maturity, and points forward to a futurity of still higher life. What precisely that coming life shall be "it doth not yet appear," but had prophets and seers never lured our vision nor appealed to our faith by predictions of immortal glory, the scientists of to-day must themselves have become prophets of "greater things to come." As it is, scientists and philosophers see in man's yearning for a higher and continued life, true intuition of immortality. They support it by long accumulating testimony from the past, and utter predictions of the future with a daring which rivals revelation. The significance therefore of growth is already seen in the *fact* and in the direction of development. It tends to higher life. As Professor Le Conte says, "Without spirit immortality the cosmos has no meaning."

2. *The laws of development.*

But higher life brings new conditions and new responsibilities. Just as the creative process tends to individualization, so individuals hold relations to one another, and to God according to the grade of their being. The higher the type of life, the higher

the type of its communion. Asserting so much however is but another way of stating that development proceeds by higher laws, as higher types of being emerge. Jesus gave to the world its most startling announcement of this principle—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—a fact, but a mystery. "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," a mystery, but a fact. Spiritual life is no more miraculous than natural—both are due to inexplicable power—but it is on a higher plane. It brings a new kingdom of personal relations to light, entailing new obligations, and conferring new benefits. In one respect the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and God's own children, are identical. They are the products of His power, and the object of His love. If He cares for the grass which to-day is in the field and to-morrow is cast into the oven, and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, why should human lives bear the strain of useless anxiety, or human hearts corrode with care? Relief from fruitless anxiety was evidently the motive of our Lord's appeal to "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." "How," in Professor Drummond's beautiful language, "without anxiety or care the flower woke into loveliness, how without weaving these leaves were woven, how without toiling these complex tissues spun themselves, and how without any effort or friction the whole slowly came ready-made from the loom of God."

It is vastly important, however, that we should not misunderstand our Lord's message, nor misinterpret the laws of spiritual life. Because man's or-

der of being is superior to that of the lilies, he is subject to a higher law. On the vegetable plane the entire process of growth is involuntary and passive. Not so with man. His highest development requires the exercise of volition. Indeed the field of morals is the realm of the will. Character is the product of its continual exertion. There is therefore *radical* difference between organic growth, and moral development. One is wholly passive. The other has two elements, one passive and receptive, the other active, voluntary and rational. So that Jacobi is correct in affirming that religion has two sides. One passive—God living in us; and the other active,—man living in God. It is the latter element of will, self-surrender, and worship, which distinguishes man from all orders of creation below him. And this factor it is, which, ignored by Professor Drummond, forever prevents natural law from reigning in the spiritual world. It sharply differentiates organic growth from moral development. And it eternally inhibits their identity. This is nowhere more plainly evident than in the illustrations employed by Professor Drummond himself. As the lilies grow “of themselves” so “a boy grows” he says “without trying.” “One would never think of telling a boy to grow.” Again “a boy not only grows without trying, but he cannot grow if he tries.” Once more, “Manuals of devotion, with complicated rules for getting on in the Christian life, would do well sometimes to return to the simplicity of nature; and earnest souls who are attempting sanctification by struggle instead of sanc-

tification by faith, might be spared much humiliation by learning the botany of the Sermon on the Mount. There can indeed be no other principle of growth than this. It is a vital act, and to try to make a thing grow is as absurd as to help the tide to come in or the sun to rise.”¹

Scarcely true of natural growth, this is quite untrue as applied to intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. We would indeed never think of telling a lily to grow, but every gardener assuredly by spade and rake and fertilizer every day disproves the assertion that “to try to *make* a thing grow is absurd.” Coming to the boy, our author is still farther from the mark. So far as his physical growth is concerned he does grow without trying, but as touching his mind and manners he cannot grow without trying. Accordingly having regard to his intelligence and morals, we do tell him “to try.” Every day by warning and encouragement, by threatening or promised reward, we urge him to “try, try again.” “*Cease to do evil; learn to do well.*” “Run with patience the race set before you looking unto Jesus.” “Search the Scriptures.” “Press forward towards the prize.” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” “Quit you like men, be strong,” etc.

The same voice which warned men against injurious anxiety, urged them to “Strive to enter in at the straight gate.” All the counsels of the Bible recognize man’s freedom, and address his intelli-

¹ “Natural Law in the Spiritual World,” p. 101.

gence. Because man can go astray but ought not, he is warned, instructed, invited. The whole of the fifteenth chapter of St. John's gospel is devoted to "telling" disciples to grow, and how they can grow. The all-important condition of growth is a life of voluntary abiding, because the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine. Precisely our responsibility in this regard led Jesus to tell us what no one would think of telling a flower. "*Abide in Me.*" "*Keep My commandments.*" "*If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide.*" "*If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you,*" etc. Much fruit-bearing is made contingent upon the obedience and conduct of the individual. The entire significance of religion in so far as it involves responsibility rests in the recognition of personal freedom.

Another principle emerges. The higher the type of personality the greater the appreciation of intercourse with God. Even among men the higher the type of individual, intellectually, æsthetically and spiritually—the higher order of communion he requires for the satisfaction of his nature. A man of great mind and exalted ideals hungers for contact with men of similar mould—and starves without it—a kind of famishment which lower natures never know. In his native hunger for the highest and best in men, is discovered a clue to man's unquenchable aspirations after God.

We shall attempt in the immediately succeeding chapters to indicate a few of the greater stages in man's widening and ripening intercourse with God as traceable in the annals of Sacred Scripture.

VI

OLD TESTAMENT STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNION

WHAT we have termed the "Second Phase" of man's communion with God was catastrophic in origin. Disobedience wrought wreckage by violation of God's law and of man's own nature, precipitating the revelation of a whole world of hitherto undreamed of relations and responsibilities. A crash to man's unenlightened peace, its pain and loss revealed to him possibilities of a wider life than he had as yet conceived, and a wider knowledge, far, both of God, and of himself. The higher significance of his experience could only come to him later. Its first effect was wholly painful, and wore the aspect of disaster alone. Before it—"Eden." After it—"the curse." Before it the sweetness of paradise. After it the bitterness of guilt. Life was smitten by death. A new thing in the earth—Conscience—started into terrible existence. Another new and frightful thing—Sin—invaded the world—worse, it invaded man—making him evil in his own eyes. Struck him with fear of the God who had hitherto seemed only and wholly friendly. In place of unthinking peace, wide-thinking anguish. In place of almost unconscious friendship, comes terribly conscious enmity and dread. Sin-sundered from God, man beholds the abyss! What is now wanted, is a communion that will bridge this moral separa-

tion. No! not bridge it, but rather annihilate the abyss; healing the wrong, blotting out the sin; and restoring transcendent separable union, by eternal inseparable unity.

Accordingly, once innocence is past and man is smitten with the consciousness of sin, the first stage in his renewal of communion with God will be the introduction of an entirely new element—namely confession—which was, and always must be the first step in a sinner's prayer. Oh! the sting of sin! Oh! the pain of penitence! Mixed with excuses, and marred by evasions, still we practice the foolish hiding our first parents attempted, only to learn that nothing can be hid, that open confession alone is the path to pardon. In the long ascent from "Paradise Lost" there are many rising stages, but the *beginning* is Eden's sad consciousness of sin, and its acknowledgment to Him whose law we have violated.

The second step in man's approach to God as revealed by Scripture was the erection of an altar. Here we see evidence of his sense that God's help was needed to right man's wrong. Expiation for sin was necessary. But from the first men differed in their conception of the significance of sacrifice. Cain's offering brought as a gift (*i. e.*, compliment) to God, was improper in motive. Abel brought an offering indicating his need of life from God and his willingness to lay life on the altar. That Abel recognized the full significance of his "living" sacrifice, may well be doubted but that it possessed spiritual import is manifest, for "by faith Abel

offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." "Will-worship" was rejected. To be worship at all man's approach to God must represent submission to His will, not a perverse insistence on our own.

So far as we are aware the stage succeeding this was the dissemination of the newly discovered principles of worship. "Then man began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26).

Yet there were two lines. In seven generations so close had communion become in one family that "Enoch walked with God and was not because God took him." Noah also "walked with God." But so general had moral corruption become among all others that God declared "My spirit shall not always strive with men"; and to stem the tide of corruption He sent the Deluge, making way for a new beginning.

The Noachic covenant forms the next step. For while it does not represent man as speaking to God, it reveals the other side of communion,—God speaking with men, encouraging them to look not for another destruction, but for a continuing and growing redemption. And man accepted the bow as the sign. Herein is seen faith exercised in the receptive act of prayer.

The next ascent brings us to all the education attained in the "calling" and training of Abraham for his unique relation to subsequent races. It includes transcendent faith. When I reflect that at that early age, a man had the consummate faith to believe that in him "all the nations of the earth" should be blessed, and forthwith set himself to the colossal

task, I am appalled. The audacity of the man, and the sweep of his vision, daze me. If a man in our day with millions of capital, and world-wide organization, set himself to do it, one would not wonder; but Abram startles us by the proportions and sublimity of his faith. The Abrahamic stage includes also a regular altar erected for worship (Gen. 13: 18.)

What is more significant, the work of the hand and the prayer of the lip, are brought into harmony. As proof that hands, and lips, were both controlled by intelligent and loving faith, Abraham gave tithes of all that he possessed. This was a great step forward. Much heathen worship is so completely a thing apart from practical life that this represents a long stride in the right direction. To live up to this standard is an achievement now; to conceive that it ought to be done was then an achievement. When the whole church shall rise to this stage of communion, there will be no lack of capital for missionary enterprise. But as yet our prayers are partial. We mean less than we *say*, and we say less than we ought. Our substance is not brought into worship. We reserve it, most of it, for secular uses. But a tithe is a fine endorsement of sincerity, and a useful auxiliary to prayer.

Furthermore, Abraham's experience included *church* membership. It made a roll of members in the new church—not written on parchment but gashed in the flesh. A line of separation was marked between God's own and the rest of the world—a mighty help to communion. To have the seal of God stamped upon a man makes him stiff to

all the winds that blow, and four-square to all temptation. He wears the uniform, and carries the flag of the King. He is *known*. Both God and men expect something of him; and he expects it of himself. Moral quality and lip quality must keep abreast in the march of daily living.

This is an advance upon tithing; and is one of the highest lessons to be learned about communion. Nor was it so easily carried out in those old days, as now, because wickedness was then fashionable; now virtue is common. Christ and Christianity have already done so much, that we can scarcely realize how dim was their knowledge, nor how great the struggle requisite to holy living.

Again, an immense ascent was taken in man's communion with God at the altar of Isaac's sacrifice. Hitherto man had thought that the sacrifice of life was the highest offering to God. As it truly is: but not smoking upon an altar. Abraham was taught that the prevalent *interpretation* of this great truth was at fault, and that God wants men "to give their bodies a *living* sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him" (Rom. 12: 1). Not dead and unacceptable. Life surrendered unto service and holiness is thus expected to accompany our communion, while God has provided a sacrifice once and for all and "hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Jacob affords the next great lesson about communion with God. Importunity unto self-effacement is requisite to the highest blessing. Jacob had previously given himself to God but he was still Jacob the supplanter. Still he trusted in his own re-

sources; but not so could he become the spiritual head of Israel. At the brook Jabbok, on his return to the land of Promise, God met him in conflict. As he is, he cannot receive the blessing, but he wrestles for that and finds it in self-conquest. He is no longer to be Jacob, but holds the angel till "touched" of God, he becomes *Israel*, a Prince with God. Man's prevailing is not self-assertion, but the giving up of everything—self included—that we may get the blessing by which we are changed to princes with God.

The remaining stages which include all the education of the Mosaic ritual, the teaching of the Prophets, and the devotional experience of the Psalmist, must be summarized more briefly.

Thanksgiving was instilled by systematic offerings and tithing.

Holiness was inculcated by ceremonial washings, sprinkling and purifications, as well as by sacrifices offered for sin.

The nearer presence and approachability of God was impressed by His abiding in the Holy of Holies, His Throne being made a "Mercy-seat" where Jehovah promised "there I will meet with thee and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." A striking contrast this, and a far advance upon Israel's terror at Sinai when they exclaimed, "Let not God speak with us lest we die."

Nevertheless a still greater advance was yet to be made, for in due season the veil of the Temple should be rent. God Himself should stand forth clothed in flesh to "tabernacle" among men, com-

muning with them in their own tongue "as never men spake"; and they should "behold His glory the glory as of the only begotten Son of God." The typology of those sacrifices which not only effected present atonement but pointed ever forward, blended with the definite predictions of the prophets in promise of the coming One, the suffering servant, the Lamb of God, the Incarnation of The Eternal, the Saviour of the world.

But the closing stage of Old Testament revelation regarding man's communion with his Maker projected so far into the future that men had to wait centuries for its fulfilment, before they could realize its full significance. For it foretold a *spiritual reign* wherein symbols should be superseded by a personal intercourse with God.

The pinnacle height of the Old Testament conception of communion, thrice repeated, is to "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Beyond this there can be nothing. It gives perfect expression to a perfect ideal. So far as the *human* side of communion is concerned no advance is possible. This is the climax step of Old Testament revelation—worship ought to be "in the beauty of holiness." The command was plain, but as yet man was unable to conceive all that was involved in that lofty ideal. They had to wait for help from the Divine side. The law had been given by Moses, but "grace and truth" were yet to come through Jesus Christ. God had promised to "pour out His Spirit"; but new light was to precede the new inspiration. The Incarnation was to usher in the

universal Pentecost. Man's communion was to be greatly changed by the revelation of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. This was the next great advance. Compared with it all preceding stages, except the first institution of communion with a sinner across the gulf of sin's separation, were insignificant.

Before, however, we enter the New Testament, a few thoughts deserve our attention.

The devotional life of the Golden Age of Old Testament worship has been fruitful to every subsequent era. Hebrew Psalmists left to all posterity a priceless heritage. In adoration there is nothing modern or ancient, to surpass or even equal, the power and beauty of the Hebrew Psalms. So far as language can become a vehicle of worship, it would seem that the heights and depths of adoring praise, and humble contrition, have found their best expression there. The language of the past is found best for the present, and the future can scarcely expect to surpass it. Even Jesus, though He shed a world of new light upon communion, couched His own prayers chiefly in quotations from the Old Testament. This is pre-eminently true of "Our Lord's Prayer" and of the prayers upon the cross.

The defect of Hebrew prayer resulted from two limitations. The Hebrews failed to realize God's love for all mankind. And they were unable to conceive their own true relationship to their fellow man. Thus, among the sublimest sentiments of the Psalms, are mixed expressions of singular vindictiveness; while some Psalms are almost wholly imprecatory. Too much however has been made

of the "imprecatory" Psalms, by opponents of the Bible. These men had narrow conceptions of God, and of ethical duty, but they were nobly zealous for the Lord. Not against themselves alone do they resent wrong, but most of the Psalms of this class burn with indignation against those who are wronging God. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?" The sentiment we so much admire in Jesus, when pronouncing woe upon hypocritical and cruel Pharisees, lived in their ire. Nor has passionate resentment of wrong been abrogated as a Christian emotion. To be "angry and sin not" is quite possible. Hebrew writers missed the mark only because they lacked the knowledge and the grace, with which Jesus has since flooded the world.

VII

NEW TESTAMENT STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNION

WITH the coming of Christ a new era opens in man's communion with his Maker.

So far as the soul's hunger was concerned no advance on Hebrew prayer seemed possible. Aspiration could no higher rise. But the scope of human knowledge could be enlarged: ampler revelation of God could be granted; and new spiritual impulse could be provided.

All this indeed was actualized in the experience of the race. The character of our communion depends upon the nature of our conceptions. And now a new idea of God, calling forth a new feeling in man, was about to change the character of all worship. Love was to take the place of fear, and tenderness to permeate all reverence.

The Fatherhood of God. The next "ascent" therefore in man's nearer approach to God was made by the revelation of His Fatherhood. This conception changed the whole cast of man's communion with God. Distance was removed—all distance except that of sin—and a new sense of community instituted. Hitherto God had been variously conceived. As Almighty and Eternal, He was Creator, monarch, supreme judge, righteous and long-suffering in mercy; but He was absolute Sovereign, "sitting upon the circle of the

earth, and the inhabitants thereof as grasshoppers." The utmost nearness conceived was that of a shepherd to his flock. But, with the Advent, comes the sense of Sonship. The paternal displaces the magisterial conception of God and He is brought nigh to every one of us. He becomes "our Father," and we become His children. And, oh! wondrous revelation, "God is love." God *so* loved us as to give His only begotten Son for our redemption. Men are called to

"Behold the amazing gift of love,
The Father hath bestowed
On us, the sinful sons of men
To call us Sons of God."

So remarkable was this advance upon old ideas, that men of that day could not understand it; nor can we, looking back, comprehend the vastness of the change. Clearly, however, men have not always felt the childlike sense of freedom and of acceptance which we enjoy in our intercourse with God.

Fatherhood, indeed, is not to be interpreted on the plane of the earthly relation. He is our *Heavenly* Father, and reverence is the first demand made upon us. "Our Father who art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name." Prayer in itself is a cultivation of reverence. Nearness increases reverence when it is transfused with love. It is in this mood that man becomes aware of the divinity within him and of the reverence due to his own nature. In awe and reverence of God he

awakes to the mysterious worth of his own being and kinship. Nor is God's Kingly element lost in the new relation; rather is it sublimated by holier thought; for He is not brought to our level; we are elevated from mere "subjects" to true sonship. No longer alien from the King; we are members of the royal family;—children and heirs—clothed with a new dignity, and infused with our high destiny.

Sonship to God is a doctrine often prostituted in our day by irreverent persons who "prate of their divinity" as though man, the animal, were as regal as is the saint "in every thought and word renewed." As though by virtue of his relation to his Anthropoidal ancestry he were as noble as when, by intelligent submission of his higher nature to "The Highest," he becomes spiritually transformed. It is forgotten that a son may be unworthy of his sonship, and dishonour the relation—though in a low sense he remains a son. The relation was made known, not to be disregarded of men, but for the improvement of our communion with "Our Father in Heaven." Reduction of His divinity to lower levels is resented, but we joy with joy unspeakable, in the increasing reverence of science and the profound searching after God characteristic of spiritual philosophy.

The Brotherhood of Man. The Fatherhood of God involves not only the "sonship of man," but also "the brotherhood of men." If we are "sons of God" we are brothers one of another, and all other relations are lost in the family kinship. All

nations and kindreds and tongues and people ought to become "a household" of faith, for God "made of one blood all nations of men." Yet it was found, by racial hatred and tribal wars, that ties of blood were insufficient to constitute a brotherhood; so now Christ comes with a nearer kinship through the bond of charity. Man renewed, discovered, by spiritual affinity, his real relation to his brother; his neighbour; his employer; his employee. Here then is a new step in communion. The glorious revelation of our sonship, which we hail with delight, imposes also the obligation of brotherhood, which is not always so eagerly hailed. How easy it is to love God! How difficult to love *all* men as brothers! We rejoice that we may ask freely, and freely receive; but "feel it" when we learn that no petition of ours must infringe upon a brother's right. Selfishness is banished from prayer; benevolence and brotherly love take its place. My prayer for God's pity upon the poor, implies my effort to relieve his need. This is a high grade of praying. But a higher grade of prayer is possible, and is also enjoined by the pattern prayer. This makes our next step

Forgiveness, necessary to forgiveness. Forgiveness, because the most difficult duty of life, is the severest test of our communion, and of our real sonship to God. He can forgive—and does it. We can forgive too. This is our divine prerogative. And by so doing we relieve the souls of men from a portion of the burden of their wrong, the pain of their sin. Our forgiveness, like His, converts foes

into friends; enmity into love; antagonism into generous and disinterested affection.

Forgiveness is the greatest miracle in the heavens or on the earth, is a magic at our disposal, and represents the divinest power with which we are endowed. This climax duty, this crux of Christian conduct, is so embedded in the model prayer that we cannot pray without pressing ourselves to its performance. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." In all things else God's action is made the standard of ours. In this alone, that its significance may be impressed upon us, our conduct to others, is made the measure of His to us. Forgiveness is essential to forgiveness, that is, to communion with God. In olden days this was not felt. Men prided themselves upon hating their enemies as royally as they loved their friends, but a new ascent towards divinity is made by Christ's ideal "Love your enemies and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Love them, pray for them, forgive them, aye, forgive as you would be forgiven. "Forgive me as I forgive," becomes an awfully solemn prayer, if in my heart I retain malice. "Happy the man who in offering it does not convict and doom himself." Christ identifies Himself with His own. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto Me." It takes two to right some wrongs. A wrong against me needs God's forgiveness, and mine. My wrong to another needs my confession to him, and to God. Sin is a difficult thing to annihilate. In its banishment God needs our assistance; and upon us is laid this serious responsibility. Without our

forgiveness some wrongs can never be righted, nor the universal atmosphere be quite cleared.

Now I venture to suggest that this pinnacle point of Christian duty would be quite beyond our attainment were it not for the supreme principle of prayer—which represents indeed the governing law of life—namely, that the entire self must be yielded to God. This is the next, and constitutes the highest stage of devotion.

Thy will be done. Worship implies submission—nay, glad acquiescence in God's will. He is supreme and His will ultimate. Never do we feel right, nor find freedom, until, shunning all things else, we seek His Sovereign will and lend our powers according to His purpose.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” said Jesus, and all things needful will fall to your possession in their normal order. The model prayer was constructed on this principle. Its first petition is “Thy Kingdom come,” and its supreme law the Divine will. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Prayer is not a human endeavour to change the will of God, but a devout effort to learn it, and a means of attaining grace and guidance in doing it.

Wherein our lives are wrong, they must be righted; wherein our desires are sordid or our ideals imperfect, they must be corrected. Prayer is neither a license to selfishness, nor permission to impair the Throne of the Universe. Yet is not our prayer the poorer. For all the *good* of the universe is ours richly to enjoy. The All-Father, like a human

parent, defends His children against themselves, but within Divine limits we may freely ask and freely receive. Our part is the hungering and thirsting, the seeking, and knocking, and the yielding of ourselves completely to His loving will—His Holy purpose—His eternal benefits.

Jesus did more than teach us to pray "Thy will be done," He trod the path by which we too may enter the light and attain the life of the Father. Nay, more; two further stages were yet to be revealed regarding communion—the latest and most helpful. Both were disclosed by Jesus and were granted by the Father to make the supreme principle, which seems so difficult in the abstract, more easy of attainment in actual experience. One is the aid which Christ gives us Himself. The other refers to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Name of Christ in Prayer. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name," but now "ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled." Could we but see it, Jesus was pointing out something of capital importance to the disciples. This new expression means something, or Christ would not have repeated it so frequently; indicating that something, hitherto secret, was now newly about to appear. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name," but "In that day ye shall ask in My name," and "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My name." What does it mean? Quite possibly the world as yet but dimly conceives its full meaning; but already we have come to see that Jesus was not dealing with a matter of

phraseology but with a cardinal principle involved in spiritual intercourse. To use our Lord's own word, it was "*expedient*" that the Incarnate and Visible Christ, of local Presence should disappear, and return as an invisible, spiritual, and universal Presence. Dwelling in each receptive heart and creating there a true Sonship with God, men would be one with Christ as Christ is one with the Father. Thus the indwelling Presence is identified with the historical Christ. Since through Him God made Himself known to man, man can best through Him come to God. Between the Infinite and the finite, He is the "door" in both directions. There is nothing arbitrary or peculiar in this. The "Way" from God to man, is the "Way" from man to God, and it is not an external method but an inherent principle. The disciples did not understand it, nor could they, till the experience ripened. We who have often used the phrase "in His Name," or "For His Sake," unthinking of its deep significance are less excusable. For have we not often attached the expression to prayers which were not in accord with His nature, nor offered for His sake, which could not have His endorsement, nor in any sense pass "through Christ" to God? But aid is provided to produce the true spirit of prayer.

The Holy Spirit in Prayer. All that Jesus revealed regarding the new era of spiritual communion was accompanied with prophecy, and promise, regarding the Holy Spirit. Some new awakening and new Power were to come upon believers. Not only were they to be born into a new realm of light and

of responsibility, but they were to be supplied with guidance, Comfort, and Power. Once a man apprehends duty, his great need is of power to perform it, or inner support to endure its strain. "Let not your heart be troubled," said Jesus. "I go" away but I will send "another Comforter." "He shall be in you" and "He shall receive of Mine," and shall make it clear unto you. Take this in conjunction with the allied statement, "All power is given unto *Me* in heaven and in earth," and "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world," and clearly the meaning is that Christ our life is to be in us a spiritual Presence, dwelling in us as we dwell in God.

What the influence of this life of double indwelling should be, broke upon the world when Pentecost came as a sun-burst of new life. Long had been the course of preparation, but now the development of the human vessel—mentally, morally, spiritually—had reached the stage where it was ripe for a new advance. And God Himself comes upon men to their fullest capacity. The Holy Spirit, and Christ, who promised to return and dwell in us to the end of the age, must not be separated from God. We must be true Trinitarians, retaining the unity of the Godhead. Pentecost is the descent of the triune God—eternal, personal, spiritual—upon a prepared humanity. What was signal then, was destined to become the order of a new dispensation. These plain fishermen are transformed to the moral giants of the day. These cowards who fled from their Master before Pentecost; after it, fill the world with

their prowess, face persecution throughout life, and hail its close with cheerful martyrdom. The *disciples* became the *apostles*, and the whole world felt the shock. Nay, feels it still. We are as much witnesses of Pentecost as were the Parthians, Medes and Elamites in Jerusalem. True, we have ceased to be surprised, but the wonder, none the less, is upon us. A new Kingdom has been set up at the heart of the world that is slowly displacing the superstition, injustice, grossness and cruelty that once held the throne by right of possession. The world is changing by a Presence, which is becoming more and more manifest every day. Men are nearer God to-day than two thousand years ago. He is impinging upon us at all angles, meeting us in all walks, standing "in the midst" of all activities. Architecture and art are eloquent of His presence among us; music finds its finest motives in "The Messiah" and kindred themes. Literature is full of Him who once was here in the flesh, and told us He would be with us to the end. Science is working up to God, because it is working in Him. And Philosophy attains its goal in an all-inclusive power, which must be "personal" to constitute an adequate fundamental assumption. We cannot pursue our thinking, or exploration, without God. He is behind all, through all, above all, and throbbing in us all. He is the light of the world, and its power.

Now, the baptism of the spirit constitutes a real awakening. It is a spiritual impulse lifting into new activities all the powers with which we are endowed. Inspiration to higher ideals, holier aspira-

tion, loftier attainment, marks the coming of God upon the individual. New hunger is begotten and satisfied; our capacity is enlarged and filled. Communion with God becomes a free flowing, life-filling, continuous experience, making prayer "without ceasing" a present fact.

How God's spiritual inflow is converted into "powers" and "gifts" which we call human, because incarnate in men, will receive consideration under the head of different "Powers" *Vide*, chapter xix. But another stage remarkable in itself and yet not fully appreciated, must next occupy our attention.

VIII

STAGES IN THE PRAYER-LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

It has already been shown, from Old and New Testament history, that the prayer-experience of the race has been a development marked by "ascents" towards God.

In a similar sense also there are "steps to the throne" for the individual. What was said in the preceding chapter makes plain that the prayer-experience of the disciples was a development. From the lower stages of its power, where they were verily "babes in Christ" they were led slowly and painfully, but finally to a point where they could literally "do all things through Christ." Not otherwise, though in varying measure, was it with patriarch and prophet of old; nor is it otherwise with the saints and servants of the Lord in our own day. Abraham had seventy-five years of growing communion with God before he attained the faith which led him to "seek a country." But not till Isaac was rescued from burning, by Divine intervention, did he learn the highest lesson of prayer. Jacob's prayer at Bethel was a mercenary bargain on the very lowest plane of prayer. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God" (Gen. 28:20, 21). But not on

that low plane could he become Israel, the Prince prevailing with God and man. At Jabbok he clung to God till conquered, everything being surrendered, self and all—for God's blessing. Therein he achieved his true triumph. So for all believers, it is in the Gethsemane of absolute surrender that God takes possession of the whole territory of our nature, and subdues it to His occupation.

Moses had his experience, so had Joshua and Joseph, Daniel and David. Every one of them grew in stature as their communion deepened with God. The Psalms of David represent experience of such elevation and marvellous range that only the spiritually minded can understand it. But no one can attempt to follow the Psalmist from his penitential agony (Ps. 51 and 32) to his exultant faith and absolute confidence (*e. g.*, in the twenty-third Psalm, and the many Psalms of thanksgiving) without gaining something of his spirit of aspiration and trust.

If then, patriarch and prophet, apostle and evangelist, had each a growing experience in prayer, so may I. To rest content with what I now possess would be my condemnation. The blessing is to those who "hunger and thirst," and who, though constantly refreshed, can never be satisfied till they awake with His likeness.

The mighty possibilities of prayer may perhaps best be shown by considering a few modern illustrations. Never in the history of the world were there examples of power in prayer to exceed those which graced the past century, or are now living; men of our flesh, bone of our bone, into whose

faces we have looked, whose hands we have touched, and whose voices have helped to teach us how to pray.

J. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission is still in our midst—apostolic in the power of his prayer—a personal example of our Saviour's promise, "And greater things than these shall ye do because I go to My Father." The China Inland Mission was founded in 1865 as a work of faith. No request for funds are made except of God. Yet the work has grown until to-day a force of over 1,200 missionary workers of whom more than 500 are native helpers, receive daily support through the prayer of faith. So great a work, standing in the midst of a mercantile and somewhat sceptical age is a remarkable attestation that the promises of God are "Yea and amen." Literally Dr. Taylor and his associates "ask and receive" all they need. On this principle the work was founded and has grown, widening the demonstration that God cares for and supports workers in His cause absolutely by faith alone, when He is trusted to do so. Without arguing that the business world should be reorganized and put upon this basis, we see proof positive before our eyes that Christian work might be and ought to be mightily extended as a work of prayer and faith. Not the prayer of Dr. Taylor alone avails to support so weighty an undertaking, but kindled at the altar of his faith every coadjutor of the work trusts also as he does. Every worker surrenders all—life and time and possessions—trusting God wholly, for such supplies as He may provide. They too live by faith,

yea! not only live, but aid in the development along faith-lines of this wonderful missionary enterprise.

Nor is the work resting alone on the prayers of the actual workers, but upon an unknown multitude of sympathetic supporters whose financial and spiritual resources are poured into the project. In other words, one man's singular trust in God has availed to light the torch of faith in many lives. His experience, monumental in actual achievement, has served to stimulate others to prove God, and to test that "All things are possible to him that believeth." Accordingly Hudson Taylor's prayer experience must be worth a good deal to any who would emulate his faith or learn the secret of his abiding power.

For most of us the real lesson to be gleaned here arises from the fact that Dr. Taylor's powers of faith were the product of slow growth and patient testing. True, he was the child of prayer, as some children are not, but not until he had spent seven years in China did he learn that his father, unable to go himself, had prayed for a son, who if granted, he would dedicate to missionary work among China's millions. His conversion took place on a certain afternoon when his mother, absent some eighty miles from home, withdrew from company, and spent the whole afternoon praying for that especial result, and arose from her knees feeling that her prayer was answered—as it really was. "I had many opportunities," he writes, "in my early years of learning the value of prayer and of the Word of God; for it was the delight of my dear parents to point out that if there were any such being as God, to trust Him, to obey

Him and to be fully given up to His service, must of necessity be the best and wisest course both for myself and others.”¹

His earlier years were haunted by skepticism, and worse by skeptics. But of this experience he says, “It may seem strange to say it, but I have often felt thankful for the experience of this time of skepticism. The inconsistencies of Christian people, who, while professing to believe their Bibles were yet content to live just as they would if there were no such book, had been one of the strongest arguments of my skeptical companions, and I frequently felt at that time and said, that if I pretended to believe the Bible I would at any rate attempt to live by it, putting it fairly to the test, and if it failed to prove true and reliable, would throw it overboard altogether. These views I retained when the Lord was pleased to bring me to Himself; and I think I may say that since then I *have* put God’s Word to the test. Certainly it has never failed me. I have never had reason to regret the confidence I have placed in its promises, or to deplore following the guidance I have found in its directions.” . . . “From the commencement of my Christian life I was led to feel that the promises were very real, and that prayer was in sober matter of fact transacting business with God” (p. 6).

This “sober” fact was tested little by little as his life’s work began to dawn upon him. It was long before he felt that he dare trust wholly to God in

¹ J. Hudson Taylor, “A Retrospect,” p. 3.

undertaking missionary work in China. Much prayer and study of the Word, and many preliminary tests of faith preceded his foreign mission. Of that period he says, "I felt that one's spiritual muscles required strengthening for such an undertaking. There was no doubt that if faith did not fail, God would not fail, but, then, what if one's faith should prove insufficient? I had not at that time learned that even 'if we believe not, He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself;' and it was consequently a very serious question to my mind, not whether He was faithful, but whether I had strong enough faith to warrant my embarking in the enterprise set up before me" (p. 13).

Of this testing time he writes, "If we are faithful to God in little things, we shall gain experience and strength that will be helpful to us in the more serious trials of life" (p. 18).

In this doctrine may be found the key to his mighty achievement. Day by day as he practically applied it, his faith grew from more to more, always attesting the principle "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." After an experience quite wonderful in itself he still however expressed his need of greater growth, and it is in these ascents towards God that his life will prove most helpful to many of us who need precisely what he needed then and what afterwards he made his triumphant possession. He writes, "But much as I had rejoiced at the willingness of God to hear and answer prayer and to help His half-trusting, half-timid child, I felt that I could not go to China

without having still further developed and tested my power to rest upon His faithfulness" (p. 22).

One beautiful expression must not be omitted. At Shanghai when his precious instruments, medicines, and all, were burnt he was struck with dismay as well he might be, but he continues, "I had not then learned to think of God as the One Great Circumstance 'in whom we live and move and have our being'; and of *all* lesser, external circumstances, as necessarily the kindest, wisest, best, because either ordered or permitted by Him" (p. 77).

In some respects, even a better illustration of the principle we are considering, namely, growth in prayer-power, is found in the experience of him whose life exerted moulding influence upon the founder of the China Inland Mission.

George Muller's early life contrasts strongly with that of young Taylor. He was a prodigal, profligate and licentious. He wasted his substance in riotous living; purloined the funds of others; became an expert in lying and deception; and finally by the hand of the law he was flung into a convict's cell. While there he drew on his ingenuity to invent deeds of villainy which he had never perpetrated that he might outdo a fellow prisoner in his proud prowess of evil.

"When a University student at Halle, he was induced by a friend to attend a prayer meeting. He was in his twenty-first year and yet he had never before seen any one on his knees praying. . . . That *kneeling before God in prayer* made upon Mul-

ler an impression never lost.”¹ Such prayer as he had known was different, both in posture and spirit. But now began that work of grace which was to result in a career of prayer and service altogether remarkable in the annals of Christian benevolence. “Every step,” says his biographer, “was one of preparation, but can be understood only in the light which that future casts backward over the unique ministry to the church and the world to which this new convert was all unconsciously separated by God and was to become so peculiarly consecrated.” As we have seen the initial step in his spiritual history was kneeling prayer. “Not only so, but prayer on the knees, both in secret and in such companionship of believers, was henceforth to be the one great central secret of his holy living and holy serving.”

At this time he was translating a French novel for the German press that he might secure funds for a visit to Paris. This work he continued to its completion, but evidently not without inward conflict, for the book was never published. Its sale was providentially hindered “until clearer spiritual vision showed him that the whole matter was not of faith . . . so that he would neither sell nor print the novel, but burnt it—another significant step, for it was his first courageous act of self-denial in surrender to the voice of the spirit” (p. 34).

“George Muller’s next step in his new path was the discovery of the preciousness of the Word of

¹ “George Muller of Bristol,” by Rev. A. T. Pierson, D. D., p. 29.

God." Not without interruption however burned the zeal of his new life. A carnal attachment at this time allured him from the path of duty and almost proved the shipwreck of his faith. From this state of wretchedness and defeat he was helped by the example of a companion—Hermann Ball—who forfeited luxury and wealth, that he might devote his life to self-denying service among Polish Jews. Ball's noble act of self-sacrifice inspired Muller to the victory which constituted his next ascent towards God. After this crucifixion of a "human passion" for the love of God a new trial awaited him in his father's dissent and displeasure. Neither threat nor entreaty however served to alter his purpose. "His resolve was unbroken to follow the Lord's leading at any cost, but he now clearly saw that he could be independent of man only by being more entirely dependent on God, and that henceforth he should take no more money from his father."

"God was leading His servant in his youth to cast himself upon Him for temporal supplies" (p. 39).

Defeat in his first missionary ambitions brought him two valuable lessons, first, "That the safe guide in every crisis is believing prayer in connection with the Word of God," and second that "continued uncertainty as to one's course is a reason for continued waiting." These lessons are too important to be passed over hastily. To every life of prayer they bring light most precious. Muller had tried to determine his career in a moment by the "casting of a lot." Not thus, however, do we feel our way to the secret purpose of God, but by study of His

Word and "waiting upon the Lord." This stage in our prayer-life where we are willing to study and to wait till our Father's hand is plainly seen beckoning us forward is one of the higher ascents in the life of communion.

Mr. Muller's career of faith was very much influenced by the lives of others, chiefly by the biographies of August H. Francke of Halle, whose work was reproduced and extended in his own; of John Newton, and of George Whitefield. Also he was first inspired by the example of Mr. Groves of Exeter to cast himself wholly upon God for support "simply trusting in the Lord for all temporal supplies." It is instructive to observe how much this man who was to become a pattern of conspicuous faith to the whole world, really learned from others. A little here, and a little there he took up into his life and greatly multiplied it in his experience. God hath need of examples for the propagation of His life of faith. Happy he who like Hudson Taylor and John G. Paton (and unlike George Muller) finds an inspiring example in the circle of the household. Indeed, it was precisely that he might attest God's answering care for His children that Muller set himself to establish a "visible" proof of this fact. His argument resembled that of Moses on behalf of faithless Israel. He saw God's people leaning on broken reeds, practicing unholy business methods, worried and oft-times cast down when they ought to have been able to rejoice in the clouds "big with mercy" that would break in God's good time with "blessings on their heads." "My spirit longed," he

affirms, "to be instrumental in strengthening their faith by giving them not only instances from the Word of God of His willingness and ability to help all those who rely upon Him, but to *show them by proofs* that He is the same in our day. . . . I considered that I ought to lend a helping hand to my brethren, if by any means, by this visible proof to the unchangeable faithfulness of the Lord I might strengthen their hands in God. . . . I therefore felt myself bound to be the servant of the Church of God in the particular point in which I had obtained mercy: namely, in being able to take God by His Word and to rely upon it. . . . It needed to be something which could be seen, even by the natural eye. Now if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained without asking any individual, the means for establishing and carrying on an orphan house, there would be something which, with the Lord's blessing might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted of the reality of the things of God. This then was the primary reason for establishing the orphan house" (pp. 397-8).

Thus little by little, step by step, from his conversion he was led sometimes by trial and often by slowly learned lessons of faith to the establishment of the most stupendous demonstration of the power of prayer the centuries have looked upon. How great George Muller's influence upon his generation was it is impossible to compute. Perhaps the *faintest* hint of his usefulness that could be suggested

would be financial, yet even that seems fabulous. Through this one man's hands, for the establishment of day and Sabbath schools, for the propagation of the Scriptures, for home and foreign missions, and for his five orphanages, there passed the sum of nearly (\$7,500,000) seven and a half million dollars. Spiritual blessings are not so easily tabulated. Thousands of lives were fired into new zeal, deeper joy, and stronger faith by his living example.

While J. Hudson Taylor's almost equally great Mission owes its inception under God to Muller's example, Muller's owed its establishment to August H. Francke's labour of faith. On Mr. Muller's tombstone is inscribed the following epitaph:

*" He trusted in God with whom
 ' Nothing shall be impossible '
 And in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord
 Who said ' I go unto My Father,
 And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name
 That will I do that the Father
 May be glorified in the Son.' And in His inspired Word
 which declares that
 ' All things are possible to him that believeth.'
 And God fulfilled these declarations
 in the experience of His servant by enabling
 him to provide and care for about
 Ten Thousand Orphans."*

At his funeral service it was said of him, "George Muller *cultivated* faith."

In his book "The Life of Trust" (p. 235) Muller tells us how this may be done.

"You ask, how may I, a true believer, have my faith strengthened? The answer is this:

"I. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is

from above . . . ' (Jas. 1:17). As the increase of faith is a good gift it must come from God, and therefore He ought to be asked for this blessing.

"II. The following means, however, ought to be used —

"(1) The careful reading of the Word of God, combined with the meditation on it. Through reading of the Word of God and especially through meditation on the Word of God, the believer becomes more and more acquainted with the nature and character of God . . . one especial means to strengthen our faith.

"(2) As, with reference to the growth of every grace of the spirit, it is of the utmost importance that we seek to maintain an upright heart and a good conscience, and therefore do not knowingly and habitually indulge in those things which are contrary to the mind of God, so it is also particularly the case with reference to the *growth* of faith. Either we trust in God, and in that case we neither trust in ourselves, nor in our fellow men, nor in circumstances, nor in anything else besides; or we do trust in one or more of these, and in that case do not trust in God.

"(3) If we indeed, desire our faith to be strengthened we should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried, and therefore, through the trial, be strengthened. . . . The more I am in a position to be tried in faith with reference to my body, my family, my service for the Lord, in business, etc., the more shall I have opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance; and every fresh

instance in which He helps and delivers me will tend towards the increase of my faith.

“(4) The last important point for the strengthening of our faith is, that we let God work for us when the hour of our trial of faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own. . . . Would the believer, therefore, have his faith strengthened, he must especially, *give time to God*, who tries his faith in order to prove to His child, in the end, how willing He is to help and deliver him, the moment it is good for him.”

Would that our age of art, and science, and business, better understood the science and art and business of prayer. We are strong at some of the weaker points of human power, but we are weakest at the point of greatest possible power. Every believer ought to help his lame faith to more strenuous and truer life by definite exercise, and to this he is inspired by the great examples God has provided us. Well has Dr. Pierson said, “God meant that George Muller, wherever his work was witnessed or his story read should be a standing rebuke to the practical impotence of the average disciple.”

IX

STEPPING-STONES TO DEVOTION

BUT other steps there are which lead to the throne. All may not discern ladders in their dreams—stairways for a ministering throng, yet if they will but open their eyes they shall see that God hath planted the world full of trees, from which any seeking Zaccheus may the better behold Him. The whole universe is hung with lamps of prayer. “For the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day *uttereth speech* and night unto night showeth knowledge.”

The world is a whispering-gallery of God. Its mountains are ascents to devotion; its streams babble His praise. Its thunders proclaim His presence; the earthquake His power. It was a Hebrew prophet who said, “The clouds are the dust of His feet.” A conception of God which makes the senses avenues for His coming to us, and enables the lips of the lilies to speak to all who are counselled to “behold” them. Such a view makes the world God’s dwelling-place, and a temple of worship. For all saints, as for all poets, nature should be a window through which to behold God. Our eyes, like our knees, should be auxiliaries to worship. Devout minds in all ages have used material things as stepping-stones to God—ladders to the sublimer beauty of holiness. A mind awake to God

can perceive even in the furnace-fires "a fourth form like unto the Son of God." This habit of making all things within and without us auxiliary to our joy in God, transforms not only earth and sky, but home and children, toil and pleasure, converting everything into "uplift" towards Him. Thereby life's enrichment is unspeakably increased. Loneliness is taken out of the world; and the common things about us become —

"altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God."

While our feet are consciously on holy ground our hearts are in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Responsive to nature's glad voices there is added the eager "Amen" of intelligence. Surely for the man who has ears to hear, nature proclaimeth the Omnipresence of God in such fashion that he must be either devout or afraid. Said an astronomer, "I have swept the heavens for forty years with my telescope and have never seen God." Ah! he told on himself. A greater than he exclaimed, "God geometrizes," and again, "I am thinking the thoughts of God, after Him." Had our astronomer the eye of Kepler, the insight of Newton, or the vision of Ruskin, he could not gaze upon a sunset without beholding glories beyond the skies. All scenes, so soon as the eye takes on true vision, become suffused with

"Light that never was on sea or land."

The visible gets its value from the Invisible—without this deeper insight the moiety of nature coarsely

seen is sundered from its high significance—the poorest fragment of a greater whole not guessed, or worse, perhaps even doubted. How different is the universe to the Psalmist. “Lord, *Thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.” So imminent is God in the universe that thought cannot fetch its complete compass without Him. There is always a want without God. No beginning, no end, no reason for anything, no source, no worship. Worship indeed becomes an intrusion, a kind of insanity. But because God *is* imminent, above all, through all, and in you all, the world is religious at heart. Nature is an evangel, pleading and leading—or penal and painful, as we accept or reject her ministry. She provides us more than the necessities of the body—teaches like her Maker that man cannot live by bread alone—and is arrayed in beauty surpassing Solomon’s that she may gratify our higher as well as satisfy our lower life. Three books hath God written, every one of them ethical. First nature, man’s home; then man himself; and finally “The Word” through man.

Nature first. And He blots out her adornments year by year that every spring-time we may feel His presence rewriting her evangel.

Second, man himself. On both these books He still is busily engaged perfecting His inscription. “I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it” (Jer. 31: 33).

The third, the written Book in man's own tongue. Not a word of it however could be uttered, not a line of it traced in ink until first it was graven on the heart of a man. "For holy men of old spake as they were *moved*."

Most of God's revelation He made in deeds. What we call "The Word" is the record. The Bible therefore is not the revelation, but the *record* of many *revelations*. Every one of them flashed vividly first upon a living soul. We do less than honour to God whose voice is not stilled forever and whose handiwork nature is, by closing our eyes to all but one writing. Carefully hath He provided three, that by their harmonious testimony we may be assured we interpret either aright.

The measure, distance and immensity of those spacial worlds indicated by the incomprehensible figures of astronomy, if viewed by themselves, daze the intellect; but scattered as star dust in the path of the saint, he accepts their passing light and knows he shall survive when they shall all be rolled up as a scroll. So comes he to a sense of his true divinity. Little he may be, compared to a star, but all stars and constellations and galaxies he is capable of apprehending. They, however big and unconscious, know not nor feel. Divinity may be centred in a spark, but it is expansive to infinity and shall endure when they all perish.

If Ruskin, the admitted prophet of art in the nineteenth century, has a message to the world, it is that art by itself, is nothing. It gains its whole import through its relation to the Infinite. It may

be prostituted for base uses by "artists" whom he would rank "in the abyss" but its voice and message is of God. Its meaning depends upon the unseen and eternal.

Some of us to-day like Elisha's servant of old, need to have our eyes opened before we can see that "the mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire." Have you ever listened to music till so entranced that when it ceased you came back to earth as from a third heaven? Have you never viewed a sunset till so lost that coming to yourself again was a discovery? Have you ever contemplated Ruben's "Descent from the Cross" till tears coursed down your face and you could have sobbed but for very shame? Have you never so felt the sublimity of a starlight night at sea that the rapture has stayed with you in slow-subsiding joy for hours? Yet the whole world of music corresponds to but *part* of your nature; and the same may be said of art, of nature, etc. It takes the whole universe and the God who created it to constitute a complete reflex to the experience of personality. All praise to those who have developed music and art, and so opened our eyes to the glories of nature that we can feel their raptures, but higher praise to those who help to reveal what a complete personality is; and show us that each immortal soul holds a relation to the universe somewhat similar to that of God's. Religious development therefore must be the highest, the one to which all others are tributary and auxiliary.

Millionfold are God's methods of teaching men to

pray. For most of us the altar-fires were kindled at a mother's knee but the flame has been fed at a thousand other fires, or else gone out. What hosts of people like Professor Drummond can pay the tribute to Ruskin for their first awakening to nature's meaning! The universe is not a waste, inhabited but by man and beast. It is God's dwelling-place, a home of prayer. A sanctuary of worship, beautified by God's own hand. So to feel, is but a first step to reverence. Browning makes Fra Lippo Lippi say,

"The world's no blot for us, nor blank;
It means intensely and means good."

The Psalmist went further and said, "God is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." If godliness were not the highest accomplishment of man, the summit glory of life, little need would there be of piling stars for stepping-stones thereto.

Yet there are individuals who ignore the world, and some who disparage its beauty; while others conceive themselves religious in proportion as they despise it. Indeed, have you not met persons who conceive "the garment of God" as but the lurking-place of Satan? So to regard nature is to seal fast one of God's revelations, and to put a ban upon the senses through which He would throng us with lessons of His tender care. Unless in the withering grass, the whitening field, the falling sparrows, we behold messages from God, we see not as Jesus saw. Yet Him we call Lord. The senses depraved

may minister to sin, but in normal use they minister to thought, and joy, and holiness. We can say more. Every pleasure our higher faculties are capable of, lead up, up, up, to mystery of which they are but suggestions and foretastes. Their elusive, joy-inspiring, ever-dawning meaning is essentially religious. Every one of them tends to reverence. They all should be aids to communion. Herein is seen the explanation of music's sacred influence in devotion. It touches the soul like the light of the stars. In music and light may be felt the overflow of heaven. Everything beautiful, as an index finger, points to the supreme glory of thought—the beauty of holiness. All along the way has God strewn flowers, and sprinkled the very heavens with suggestions of Himself. Our fulness of joy therefore, during the pilgrimage can be attained only as we enter into the glories about us, as well as feel those within and above us. To attempt to be religious, as many do, by inner and upper light alone is to have a barren, impoverished earthly life, and to lose the benefits of soul culture divinely provided for us in the beauties of nature.

X

LORD TEACH US TO PRAY

WHEN the disciples urged their request, "Lord teach us to pray," little did they think what it involved. When we echo their sentiment, and most earnestly hope it will be answered, we little conceive *how* the lesson may be taught us.

It is a serious matter to make this request of the Lord. Not something to be lightly done. It demands moral heroism to realize what such a prayer may mean, and yet to make it; and then go straight forward with God, and *learn* the secret. Yet all things considered, it was, and it is, a perfectly natural request to make. We all have difficulty with our prayers. Questions continually arise such as:—Is anything really effected by prayer? Am I praying aright? How can prayers be answered? Am I right in pressing such and such matters continually in prayer? etc., etc.

Assuredly we want to pray in God's way. If there be any divine secret, we aspire to learn it; and no craving could be more normal. It is the most wholesome hunger of our nature. Yet, asked by Christ's disciples it seems a remarkable request; because they had already received so much training in prayer.

First, they were all Hebrews, and Hebrew people then as now were jealous of the religious training of

their children. More than with any other people perhaps, "family worship" was with them a fixed institution. As children these men had been taught to pray. Then some of them, John and Andrew at least, had been disciples of John the Baptist and had been taught prayer by him; as we see from the form of their request, "Lord teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples." Again, more than two years previously these disciples had listened to the sermon on the mount, which included, in addition to "The Lord's Prayer":—

(1) A warning against artificial or unreal prayer. "And when ye pray ye shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. . . . But when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber; and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him" (Matt. 5: 6-8).

(2) The assurance of an answer, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7: 7).

(3) Also assurance of a loving and wise con-

sideration, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (7: 11).

(4) The need of doing God's will, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, etc." The need of forgiveness (Matt. 5: 14, 15). And the need of putting *first*, things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" (6: 33).

Furthermore, for upwards of three years they had listened to their Lord in prayer. Indeed it is His singular grace in devotion that now moved them. "And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place that when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." They felt He possessed a joy and power in prayer they fain would share. They realized that His prayer exercised remarkable influence upon those who heard it. Such influence they too would wield. Hence their request. I think we have all in some degree, had a similar experience. The saintly influence of some men and women in devotion is so contagious that we listen and long for its secret. There is in it "power with God and man."

Still further, the disciples knew our Lord's habits of prayer. Its frequency, its midnight sessions, its confidence, its importunity—all the secrets of prayer had been pressed upon them by example. They had already received almost all the training possible in prayer, but not all. What they needed now was not verbal instruction about praying (though they

were to get yet more of that on the "last night"), but experience in prayer, and that was soon to come upon them. How soon they did not realize. What teaching there would be in it they little dreamed. For the present however Jesus merely repeats the same model prayer, given previously on the mount, and puts even this in balder form.

But they did the daring thing. They asked to be *taught* to pray. They meant it. And in due season, the discipline came. Came with terrible severity. Their Lord was arrested and crucified. Crushed themselves, all hope was shattered. Worse still, they had forsaken Him. To the dejection of their loss, was added the mockery of the enemy; and their own bitter self-condemnation for cowardice. Seven times heated, was the furnace of their refining! But with the Resurrection a new life; with Pentecost a new Power; comes into the world, and it operates through these men. Before this they had learned the theory of prayer. Now by anguish touch with God, they came to discover the power of His communion.

Thus were they taught to pray. We see the principle of their development. Their perfection like the Master's came through suffering. Divine strength was revealed through their weakness.

Is this a hard doctrine? No. It represents but the particular application of a general law. All high attainments cost pain—the pain of patient subjection. But it is accompanied by a law equally universal. Discipline and pain relax at the moment of achievement. Nay! often resolve into pleasure.

Here is no ground for discouragement. This knowledge should but whet the appetite and hold faith to its anchoring place. Every sincere man desires to know the whole truth; that as speedily as possible he may bring himself into harmony with all the laws of his complex being.

One other thought! If we do not ask to be taught, nor make preparation for our needed lessons they may be sent us all the same. The chief difference then will be that not being in a prepared mood, we may need severer discipline. Earthly parents do not always wait till their children ask for teaching. They exercise superior wisdom in supplying it. "And if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father?" Our teaching must often be by discipline, but if we conceive its significance from the Divine standpoint we shall rejoice as the apostles rejoiced and like them we shall discover that we too have come in the plenitude of grace to the exercise of Divine power.

XI

PRAYER, SECRET AND SOCIAL

ASCENTS, or advancement in our communion may be made in solitude, or in association with others; for secret and social prayer have different uses and benefits. Something there is which the soul can get when the closet door is shut. And something else which it best can get in united fellowship with God. Neither can substitute, yet each supplements the other, to the fuller satisfaction of our many-sided nature. Diverse needs are met in divers ways. The life of Jesus is our example here as in everything else.

PRIVATE PRAYER

Our secret needs we take to God in privacy. In undistracted, undisturbed communion the soul reposing on the Eternal finds rest and renewal. He who had not where to lay His head and no closet door to shut, must nevertheless get away from the world and the multitude and be alone with the Father. His "closet" was the solitary wilderness or silent mountainside. His closet door was the drawn drapery of the midnight. All day long was He pressed by multitudes. Their sick, and lame, and blind, drew from Him healing. The thirsting ones called forth those wondrous words of wisdom and of life. Jewish Rabbis, Pharisees and Sadducees

dogged His steps; and the leering, jesting rabble scoffed His ministry. He and His disciples had scarcely time to eat. Oh! the refreshment of being alone with God! When the soul is thirsty how it loves to draw from the hidden springs! When the strain is past human endurance, how restful to "cast all your care upon Him" and to feel that "He careth for you." We need the human wounding, and weariness, to appreciate the heavenly healing and balm. The stern reality of one enables us to feel the blessed reality of the other. How little we know about our Saviour's private prayer after all. The life of prayer is so secret that though we may learn something about certain times and seasons when the world is shut out, we can know nothing about the soul's *secret*. Every life has its experience far beneath the gaze of men. Every one who really loves prayer, has habits known only to God and himself. And the man who has not a holy of holies, sacred and secret to himself for private communion, may rest assured that there are resources of prayer yet undiscovered in his life.

God has so created us, part of the universe in which we live, that nature has a ministry for the soul not to be obtained except at nature's altar. Massillon felt it at sight of his native mountains. I have felt it under Niagara. Looking down from some mountain height, or gazing into the eyes of night, will inspire feelings not to be felt in the factory or counting-house. The shadow of the mountain, the marks of the desert can be traced in the moral history of the race. The greatest of

the Hebrew prophets was prepared for moulding the destiny of Israel by forty years of wilderness solitude. He who was "more than a prophet" grew and waxed strong in spirit and "was in the deserts till the day of His showing unto Israel."

Not the moments of secret communion, but its months, and years, tell on a character; and through a character upon a nation. That type of "solitary wilderness" has often shrunk to the dimensions of a prison, without losing its virtue. Paul and Silas were not the only prisoners who soothed their pain by prison praise. Not every Peter has been *released* by an angel for the world's benefit. More have been detained for the same purpose. The dungeons of the world have exerted a telling influence on the progress of civilization. Joseph's prison career shaped the history of Egypt, as well as that of Israel. Daniel's experience in the Babylonian den told on Medo-Persian history. In the solitude of the Mamartine prison Paul's epistles blossomed for a greater fruitage than all his active labours could produce. From a rocky seaside cell at Patmos exhaled the fragrance of St. John's closing experience by which the Christian's future has been illumined and many a death scene has borrowed glory. John Knox learned something as a galley slave that has lived ever since in the liberty-loving bosom of that people, for whom he won religious freedom.

In Bedford jail was gained the *leisure*, as well as the communion, by which John Bunyan was enabled to lend his light to millions of Christian pilgrims from the city of destruction to the celestial city.

108 INTER-COMMUNION WITH GOD

No one knows how much the world owes to the enforced confinement by which noble lives have been pressed into prolonged secret communion with God. But we know enough to realize that every little has its worth, and that every life may well cultivate at liberty, what so many have found by force, to be priceless precious. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee" (Matt. 6:6).

SOCIAL PRAYER

But another side of our nature is met by social prayer. When the common lot of man is to be presented in earnest intercession, then all the help we can gain by mingling sympathy, and rising sigh, and loud amen, and growing, flowing tide of feeling is what we seek. One tells his story to the Lord, and pours out fervent cries and tears for what he needs, and another from a different vantage ground opens up new fields for feeling and new reasons for strong beseechment and so emotion waxes and with it prayer grows warm, and every soul is kindled by the other's ardour. Was it not so during those days of prayer that preceded Pentecost when they were met together with one accord in one place? Was it not so when Jesus called the disciples into a desert place apart? Is it not implied in the command "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together" and in the promise "that if two or three of you shall agree on earth as touching

what they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven" ? What could be finer ? What more apt or truer, than the following from Dr. James Stalker ?

"United prayer acts on the spirit very much in the same way as conversation acts on the mind. Many a man's intellect is slow in its movements and far from fertile in the production of ideas, but when it meets another mind and clashes with it in conversation, it is transformed; it becomes agile, and audacious; it burns and coruscates, it brings forth ideas out of its resources which are a surprise even to itself. So where two or three are met together, the prayer of one strikes fire from the soul of another; and the latter in turn leads the way to nobler heights of devotion. And lo! as their joy increases, there is One in their midst whom they all recognize and cling to. He was there before, but it is only when their hearts begin to burn that they recognize Him ; and in a true sense they may be said to bring Him there—"Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," (*"Imago Christi,"* p. 134).

I fear some of us have been unfortunate enough to live a long time before we came to know that a "prayer meeting" was something more than a duty imposed upon us by the church, a divine privilege provided by God's blessed economy for meeting wants involved in our social nature, and enabling us by mutual sympathy and purpose to multiply our powers of intercession. One reason for this may have been the mechanical or Laodicean prayer meet-

ings we have sometimes attended; another perhaps is simply this, we have not entered into the philosophy of it and did not know what to expect. When we have the privilege of listening to music we compose ourselves to enjoy the emotions it inspires; when opportunity is afforded we let the soul glow and rapture and feed itself on the beauty of nature's resplendent offerings. And where two or three or more souls aflame with God meet in accord, it is a blessed opportunity to dwell in heavenly places with Christ Jesus while we cultivate spiritual emotions. If the church were richer in holy feeling, it would not be so straitened in its practical endeavours. We can do anything we *want* to, and the reason we do not want to is because we do not rise to the sense of the occasion. When we descend from Pisgah's heights or Horeb's experiences we can strangely put the world beneath our feet. "Other worlds than ours" are in sight; other powers than ours press consciously upon us. Other "things" than ours receive our consideration. Our life for the time being "is hid with Christ in God." The right kind of a prayer meeting is a helpful means for broadening our view of life, and deepening our sympathy with our kind.

This suggests what I think we have all felt. There are certain persons whose prayers are always helpful to us; certain people whose very presence is a benediction; certain friends who call out the best that is in us, and with whom to associate is an altar-stairs experience. As a matter of fact all the kings of power in prayer, all the men who have

turned the world upside down have had similar weaknesses satisfied by similar experience. Soul helps soul in spiritual climbing. Thus Jesus took Peter, James, and John aside for prayer—and transfiguration glory enveloped them. Thus the apostles went two by two to a world's conquest. Thus Luther had his Melancthon, and the Wesleys and Whitefield their "Holy Club." So also George Muller had the prayer meeting first at Johann V. Wagner's and later, in his private room. Dr. Hudson Taylor's associate in prayer and faith-cultivation was first Dr. William C. Burns, and later John Jones; while interest in the China Inland Mission is sustained by associated prayer. It is a good thing for a person to come in contact with people who so trust God that they cast themselves entirely upon Him for support as these missionaries do.

Every one ought to find some kindred souls with whom he can hive for spiritual purposes. Any prayer meeting that can have a nucleus of such living, voiceful "hunger" will soon kindle a flame that will light a whole district. One person must be the soul of such a nucleus. He must have both an experience and a purpose to draw other natures near by spiritual attraction. Momentum comes with growth and numbers. Humanity is subject to contagions. "Men are gregarious," children play together. Friendship is expansive and elevating; soldiers can march better together than singly. An "army" feels something not felt by a crowd. Every soldier receives something from the combination. Unconscious of *giving*, he is strongly con-

scious of *receiving*. Likewise in spiritual fellowship none lose anything, yet all gain something. An evidence of that invisible Presence whose life, pressing upon all, overflows from each to each, awakening subtler sympathy, kindling fresh enthusiasm, inspiring new ideas and imparting higher power. Such an overflow accompanies all heart contagion; so that in spiritual intercourse two and two are more than four, and the over-plus stands for a power invisible, yet higher than the visible associates. This multiplication of power requires the assembling of ourselves together with one accord and in one place.

XII

INTERCESSION—ITS LAW AND FRUITION

ONE of the higher stages in our communion with God is the experience wherein we bring the needs of others to the Throne. This putting of ourselves between God, and the wants of His children, has a law of blessing all its own. All prayer has a reflex influence. It is what goeth out of a man that either defileth him or purifieth him. On account of this universal law, intercession is a habit of thought, and discipline, which independently of all the good it may call down upon the object of our prayers, brings out some of the very best qualities of the human heart. A man's acts follow the line of his thinking. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." His meditation upon any theme usually bears *fruit*; if he plan evil,—of wickedness; if he contemplate good—of benefit. Accordingly, Intercession at the Throne for the welfare of the poor, touches the springs of the pocket, as well as those of the heart; and the hand lends its aid to the soul's strong crying.

In the Christian experience two things invariably go together. These are true fellowship with God; and true sympathy with men. Neither can be perfect without the other. We must have God's life flowing into ours, before we can feel His sympathy for men. And true heart-touch with our fellow

men is necessary to open the sluices by which God's grace can enter our lives. The gates must be open in both directions, that the current of His grace may have free course, and be glorified in us. Worship alone makes a poor sacrifice. "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6). "Is not this the fast that I have chosen (not to bow down your head like a bulrush, spreading ashes and sackcloth), but—to let the oppressed go free and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh" (Is. 58:5-7).

Sympathy with men, real and practical, is essential to true fellowship with God. Intercession is the divine means provided for keeping the heart warm, for making the hand willing, and for allowing God to bring His love to bear on the poor and distressed. We are pleased to think of *our* generosity in feeding the poor. We look for the promised reward, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My disciples ye have done it unto Me," forgetful that God's way of feeding the poor is still by blessing the little that belongs to somebody, and multiplying it, so that His disciples can distribute it for Him to the hungry. Generally, too, the fragments left are baskets-full more than the original supply. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and his good deed will He pay him again" (Prov. 19:17). In New Testament phraseology, "Give and it shall be given unto you; good meas-

ure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6: 38).

In giving, as in prayer, practice makes perfect. Our deeds of benevolence, and indeed all our activities, require the balance and judgment, the wisdom and sympathy, which can be obtained only at the Throne. No man can preserve his balance long who has not Divine adjustment. Vessels that cross the main must hold on by the stars. The needle of a compass always feels for the pole, but every compass needs frequent examination, lest some derangement make it point a little out of true. And so it is with the soul, we must bring it often for adjustment, and correction, at the mercy-seat.

Intercession is a duty enjoined by express Scriptural command —

(1) "Pray one for another" (Jas. 5: 16).

(2) "Brethren pray for us" (1 Thess. 5: 25; 2 Thess. 3: 1; Heb. 13: 18).

(3) "Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5: 44).

(4) Neglect of intercession is sin. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12: 23).

Observe how many of our Lord's miracles were the gracious answers to intercession, as when the centurion pleaded for his servant, the woman of Canaan for her daughter, and the father for his luna-

tic son. See what blessings are promised to intercession when St. James assures us that "the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him" (5:15).

But in intercession as in so many other phases of Christian experience we are often most helped by inspiring example; and the pages of Holy Writ are illumined by many precious examples for our encouragement to this virtue. Never but once is Abraham seen to better advantage than when, standing over against Sodom, he pleads for the doomed city. Not unsullied had been the patriarch's life, but as we hear his eager argument, slowly, reluctantly, reverently, dropping from the "fifty" to the "ten" for which the city might have been spared, we feel a great soul in terrible agony is wrestling with the Lord. No one can live through the suspense and realize the power of that prayer without realizing also the majestic nobility of the intercessor, and desiring to be capable of feeling, as Abraham did, deep and great interest in the welfare of others. But if this be true of the patriarch, what shall be said of the prophet Moses. Never in all his wonderful career, from the palace of the Pharaohs to the lonely heights of Nebo, did Moses appear to such advantage as in his intercession for sinful Israel. They may be blotted out and his own family made heirs of the promise, but forgetful of self, careless of personal glory, his heart wrung with agony for his unworthy charge, he cries, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of

gold; yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin: and if not, blot me I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Ex. 32: 31, 32).

That seems the utmost abandon of self-sacrifice, yet one example surpasses it; not Stephen's, nor yet Paul's; but that of Jesus Christ our Lord, who for our sake became poor. We did esteem Him "stricken of God," but not so, "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. . . . He was numbered with the transgressors yet He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." He poured out His soul unto death for us. All His ministry was for our sake and still He ever liveth "to make intercession for us."

Hard and cold is the heart indeed that is not touched by what He did for us. Strangely foreign from Him is the heart that does not long to live and to pray as did He, ministering unto, and interceding for, others.

Intercession is a Christian privilege to which every heart true to its best impulses, is prompted. Intercession is a means to personal profit, for in our prayer for others we "see ourselves as others see us," and find our way to meekness, and greater humility, as needing the help and sympathy of our fellows. Intercession is the necessary completion of a life that forgetting not itself in prayer, flows over in devotion for the good of others. It remembers Paul's injunction "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanks-

givings be made *for all* men," and the more impressive command of Christ regarding the unevangelized, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest" (Jas. 9: 38). It comes to realize too the fulfilment of that blessed promise, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (Jas. 5: 16).

Not till the church awakes to the true ministry of intercession can the mission fields of the world awake to the true power of Christianity.

XIII

THE REFLEX INFLUENCE OF PRAYER

PRAYER has a twofold influence, one direct, the other reflex. Our reason for spending a moment on the reflex benefit of prayer, is the fact that some people affect to ignore it altogether; while others consider subjective retroaction the only power possible to prayer.

Advocates of the latter position maintain that prayer can exert no direct influence upon God; nevertheless they tell us that it is not useless to pray. Because, although the worshipper is seriously deluded, yet by doing his thinking in the attitude of prayer, certain benefits accrue to him in practical experience. Some of these may be enumerated —

(a) Prayer leads to self-examination. One cannot pray without coming to a truer knowledge of his own condition.

(b) Praying tends to the habit of meditation. It is a study of the situation in the very best frame of mind for getting at truth.

(c) It tends to a comprehensive view of the affairs under consideration, enabling a man to come to more rational judgment.

(d) Prayer conduces to humility. The conception of God's presence serves to impress upon us a consciousness of our shortcomings.

(e) Praying is done in a reverent spirit. And

reverence saves man from much that is unmanly. Thus prayer has an ennobling tendency.

(f) Our thought of others; sympathy with the poor, the sick, the bereaved, the unfortunate, has a tendency to quicken benevolence. The thought is a seed, which bears fruit in conduct. In short, the habit stimulates faith and love, hope and obedience.

More might be written in this strain, as though prayer were merely a subjective experience conducive to prudential action, and leading to thoughtful, generous conduct. Yet such a presentation of the case would be false. For even so much could not be true unless the prayer were real prayer—a soul in touch with God. The whole virtue would be lost were a conscious imposition indulged in. Soliloquy is one thing—prayer another. Prayer may be “meditative,” but even when it is so, it is meditation plus something else; and it is the plus quantity which adds to human power and wisdom, the wisdom and power of God.

Most assuredly a reflex influence accompanies prayer. In this fact indeed is seen the evidence of its naturalness. For reflex benefit results from the normal exercise of every power we possess. There are no exceptions. It is true of eating, drinking, sleeping, and study. The grocer behind the counter, the farmer at the plow, the merchant in his office, have all an ultimate object in view, yet derive positive pleasure in their occupation. If not, they are out of joint with their business. An abnormal element is present somewhere. Day and night, author

and artist, financier and statesman, striving for fame, or wealth, or power, drink deep draughts of pleasure from their very toil. Nurse and physician and missionary have a similar experience. Yet, in every case the ultimate is the supreme object sought. So of prayer; it is a means to an end, a real intercourse with the Supreme Being; and is effective in proportion as it brings a human life into conjunction with God. For by this process life is fulfilled, and the potential made actual. Implicit in the whole economy of spiritual things, the impulse to pray is deep-seated in the nature of man, and its benefits readily apprehended. Observe the philosophy of this. In the words of Dr. Phelps, "Mind is so made, that it needs the hope of gaining an object, as an inducement to effort. Even so simple an effort as that involved in the utterance of desire, no man will make persistently, without hope of gaining an object. Despair of an object is speechless. So if you wish to enjoy prayer, you must first form to yourself such a theory of prayer,—or if you do not consciously form it, you must *have* it,—and then you must cherish such trust in it, as a reality that you shall feel the force of an object in prayer. No mind can feel that it has an object in praying, except in such degree as it appreciates the Scriptural view of prayer as a genuine thing."

A mistake at this point would be fatal. Prayer is not beating the air—is not eating ashes. More than meditation, or soliloquy, prayer cannot produce the results ascribed to it unless it be veritably a communion of a human spirit with the Divine.

Oh, make no error here. Let no false conceptions linger unexamined. Give the heart a chance to be true to itself. It will not mislead you. As true as the needle to the pole, it will seek God, and feel the thrill of life. By doing His will, we learn of the doctrine whether it be true. Trusting our tendencies, and testing them in real experience, is the only method of ascertaining the powers possessed by our faculties. Faith is no exception to the general rule. Our conviction on this point must be as definite and as fixed as our trust in the evidence of our senses. It must become as natural to us to obey one as the other. If we suffer our faith to drop down from the lofty conception of prayer as having a lodgment in the very counsels of God, by which the universe is swayed, the plain practicalness of prayer as the Scriptures teach it, and as prophets and apostles, and our Lord Himself performed it, drops proportionately—and in that proportion our motive to prayer dwindles. Of necessity, then, our devotions become spiritless. We cannot obey such faith in prayer, with any more heart than a man who is afflicted with double vision can feel in obeying the evidence of his eyes. Our supplications cannot, under the impulse of such a faith, go, as one has explained it “in a right line to God—they become circuitous, timid, heartless. They may so degenerate as to be offensive, ‘like the reekings of the Dead Sea’ ” (“The Still Hour,” p. 40).

Elsewhere are treated those fundamental mysteries which haunt the thoughtful, and repeatedly reappear on the most inopportune seasons. The

reader is invited to avail himself of such aid as may there be found; for at some time every intelligent soul is bound to think himself into the essential truths of this supreme subject. (*Vide* "The Mysteries of Prayer," Chaps. XVII and XVIII.)

XIV

THE ACCUMULATIVE POWER OF PRAYER

To perceive a truth is one thing; to appreciate it another; higher still is the endeavour which would appropriate it for one's own; but highest is that continued exercise by which an ideal is pursued till it becomes part of one's life; embodied in the flesh—incarnated in a personality.

This process, from perception to possession, we are all familiar with, under the name of habit. To this end Jesus spake a parable that *men ought always to pray* and not to faint. For by so doing what there is in prayer blossoms into experience and bears fruit in the world. If any one would estimate the regal force resident in a worthy habit, let him ponder for a moment the terrible tyranny of an evil one. We forget the tremendous power of the good, because of its very beneficence; but the cruel increasing pain of an evil habit will not permit its mastery to be forgotten. Yet the good is as good, as the bad is bad—and better. Singular it is, that the full worth of habit is appreciated in so many walks of life, yet so culpably neglected in others.

Habit may be viewed in two relations: the human, and the divine.

From the human standpoint, habit is the repeated and intelligent process by which men attain facility,

speed, precision and skill in the performing of difficult operations. It is the continued exercise by which men grow to increased strength. Habit simplifies movements, tending to make men automatic, as well as effective, along the line of their specialty. Moreover, with care and efficiency arises the sense of pleasure. A man is a "bundle of habits," happy and useful or useless and miserable, according to his making.

From the Divine standpoint, habit is nature's way of storing up past endeavour in a human treasury. Not an iota is lost. Habit is God's way of gathering the scattered energies of raw human ability, and compressing them into a consistent self-conscious character. Developing men morally, as surely as it does physically, habit fortifies a man for the hour of trial, entrenches him against temptation, and equips him for performing heroic duty in sudden crises. It is this cumulative quality of habit that reveals its inestimable force; for it is God's method of making a sum total, refined and effective, of all the powers with which life is invested; so that the aggregate force of a man's whole history can be concentrated into a single blow at the supreme moment, or at any moment.

Which view of habit is the more appreciated in common life is attested by the aims of the ordinary citizen, and by those world-embracing institutions that mark our age as commercial and industrial. That the other view is of paramount importance is evidenced by the fact that by universal consent a people *ought* to be moral and heroic. In brief, one

element in habit is prized and sedulously applied as a means to wealth. The other ought to be even more prized, and as eagerly appropriated as a means to spiritual power.

Both of these inherent properties of habit deserve consideration because they play an important part, first in making character effective; and second in making it a continual development. Of the first point an excellent illustration is to hand in the experience of the musician. Three things must he do to attain proficiency. He must master himself; his instrument; and the theory of music. Then, the music he thinks will fall almost automatically from his fingers, through the instrument, in entrancing harmonies. He holds such a relation to the laws of music, and the means of its expression, that his thought and feelings quite naturally become objective or actualized in music.

To follow the analogy. The man who would be effective in prayer must be one with God—in heart and thought; and then so execute his thought and feeling, that God's will becomes objective in deeds and movement. It is not sufficient for him to know the theory of prayer; he must so apply it to the practical interests of life, that the words of his worship, and the work of his hands, shall be harmonious. Nor are there so few who have approximated this divine skill as might be supposed. Sainthood often practices an unostentatious ministry. But never arose worship like incense from a useful life, except where comprehensive prayer was made a daily exercise; where the pleading was --

“ Lord, help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.”

For by its very nature communion can be perfected only when the entire faculties of the worshipper harmoniously co-operate in loyal and practical service of God.

The second truth, and that which above all here concerns us, is what may be termed the divine purpose of habit; its tendency to project itself beyond the present, carrying its wealth into the future. God's interest in making the human soul a reservoir capable of retaining all the good stored therein, and ever bearing interest for the to-morrows of time, and the glory of eternity, seems scarcely to have dawned upon men. At least it has awakened no enthusiasm. How many Christians after a day of patient trial, or toilsome endeavour, glory in the fact that all day long they have been laying up virtue for the present, and enriching the entire inheritance of the future? Yet in this very principle, imbedded in the heart of life's laws, we glean something of the Godlikeness and immortality of the soul. It never loses anything good impressed upon it. Every addition makes it more divine. “ Reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.” The daily performance of duty lays up treasure in the soul, as daily exercise stores energy in the muscles, or skill in the nerves; and, with it all, brings our powers into submission to Christ. Every minute is precious; every deed tells on eternity, either for gain or for loss. Not an evil thought, not an unworthy inten-

tion, but reduces the soul's power, and tarnishes its beauty. Surely here is a thought calculated to arrest attention, for it bears on all the tenses of the blessed life. Every day adds, or subtracts, something from both earth and heaven. Yet how carelessly we live ! and oh ! how badly we mismanage our praying ! Many neglect communion till distress drives them to the throne. But, alas ! no sudden forcing in an emergency can compensate for lack of mental and spiritual discipline. Constant communion is essential to continuous development. He who weaves himself by daily growth to onward, upward forces, feels secure even in the hour of trial. He who lapses till the stress shall fall has no grip of "abiding" things. He is not anchored to that which is within the vale. Strain brings to him confusion and defeat.

"But surely," exclaims one, "God does not want us to go to such pains about prayer. If a soul is earnest is not that enough ?" No, it is not. It is good enough for a pagan, or for a child ; but you are neither. Possession of intelligence involves responsibility, just as possession of wealth does. The prayer of a rich man has full weight only when endorsed by his wealth ; and the intelligent man's prayer must match his powers in every way, or be wanting. Prayer is a dealing with *God*, and has worth only as it has worth in His sight. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." The precise weight of every prayer is known at the only place where it can pass current. We are not expected to remain "babes" in Christ ; but are specifically enjoined to

grow; to seek; to press forward. "Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection" (Heb. 6: 1).

Aye. God would have us take pains "watching unto prayer," "steadfast in prayer," "fervent in spirit," and importunate with the widow's importunity; hungering, thirsting, panting, striving. There is no lassitude in language like that. "What God requires and looks at," says Bishop Hall, "is neither the arithmetic of our prayers,—how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers—how eloquent they be; nor the music of our prayers—how sweet our voice may be; nor the topic, nor the method, nor even the orthodoxy of our prayers," but what He does require is sincerity in desire, and consistency in conduct. The one habit in prayer most desirable is intense reality. Mean it; be it. So long as prayer is kept in the realm of the emotional, and dissevered from the work of the world, so long will it be misleading to the worshipper, and a dishonour to God. The young Hebrew who inquired about eternal life could be "perfect" only by dedicating his wealth to the kingdom. Had he not possessed riches he might have been perfect on a different plane; but in Christ's eyes he could not keep his wealth outside of his responsibility.

Of cloud-land prayer the church has enough, but of that spiritual striving which lays hold on all the forces of God, recognizing that the kingdom of heaven touches the soil and should include all harvests and all activities, she has great and crying need. So soon as the church is wholly devoted to God the

world will speedily be brought to His feet. The power is waiting, but it can only be applied through individuals; and the "units" are not ready.

It behooves us to remember, that more than we are accustomed to think, our moods and variations, our dejections and exultations, depend upon our relation to God. In other words upon our communion. Elijah on Carmel and Elijah under the juniper bush is the same man—with a difference. The trolley car in circuit, and out of it, is the same car, with a difference. Elijah in the wilderness feels he is alone, and is weak; Elijah on Carmel felt God was with him, and was strong. In his case and in ours, we must bear in mind that physical conditions affect spiritual tone, for the human body is a factor in communion. But look at Calvin! Half sick most of his life, nevertheless God projected Himself through that shattered body across all succeeding centuries. The fitness of the vessel is chiefly its moral purity. God can compensate for muscle, better than for any other lack, but a vessel must be unto honour to be meet for the Master's use.

If we had nothing but the maxims of men such as "Practice makes perfect," "Experience teaches," "Habit is second nature." we might apply these to our prayer-experience and be wiser than we are. But our supreme authority must ever be the voice that speaks "as never man spake." Jesus would take us away from the Old Testament rules of prayer, up to the New Testament principles of communion. Under the old dispensation certain hours

were known as "the hour of prayer." The Psalmist's prayer regulation was "evening and morning and at noonday." "Three times a day," "Seven times a day," etc. But transcending rules Jesus announces the principle, "Men ought always to pray" (Luke 18: 1), "Pray without ceasing," "Continue steadfastly in prayer" (Col. 4: 2), "Instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). "Praying always with all prayer and supplication" (Eph. 6: 18), "Rejoice in the Lord alway," etc.

Herein we see the spirituality of the act and the reality of the thing. As Professor Elmslie has pointed out "prayer without ceasing would be impossible, if prayer were an overt act, a posture of the body, an occupation of the lips, but not so if prayer is an attitude of the soul, a temperament or disposition of the spirit." In God's sight a man's prayers are the active endeavours of his will, the set purpose of his life, the warm love of his whole nature. Without doubt where the silent resolution exists, there will be also "the fruit of the lips." How true is Ruskin's remark, "There is nothing so small but that we may honour God by asking His guidance of it, or insult Him by taking it into our own hands."

In fine, the worth of habitual communion is attested by the fact that where the soul of devotion exists, the whole life becomes a continuous living prayer. To such an extent is this true that when the habit of communion is once formed, it is often found difficult to distinguish between meditation and prayer. Our planning and thinking are so submitted to God for His guidance that it takes on the

nature of communion. Unconscious prayer, like unconscious breathing, is the constant exercise of the trustful soul. Dwelling in a spiritual atmosphere we partake of its vitalizing influence. And when we come to conscious communion, so far from urging personal ends, we acquiesce in the Divine will, desiring God to direct our thinking and to act through our activity.

Mighty the difference between a struggling believer whose prayers are chiefly petitions, and the saint who has so entered the fullness of God that his devotions express the fullness of his soul rather than its emptiness. The latter state represents the cumulative power attained by continued intercourse.

Habit, it will be observed, is more than a repetition, it is a growth. More than a growth, it is a rational process. More than a rational process, it is a divine method by which God lays up divine treasure in earthen vessels; so that every worthy wish and every loyal endeavour of earth tells on the heaven that awaits us and enriches the eternity before us.

PART THREE

God's Communion with Men—Its Mystery, Power, and Practical Operation

“The chief end of every real religion is to secure God's communion with each individual soul, and every devout man knows that he himself cannot bring about that communion, but that God does it for him. This act of God is that revelation on which the reality of all religion rests. In the soul of the man who stands amid such revelation, religion is established; and that participation in the divine life, towards which our religious longing yearns, consists in a man's becoming conscious that he means something to God, and that God is entering into communion with him.”

—*Hermann.*

XV

GOD'S COMMUNION WITH MEN

THAT memorable "last night" before our Saviour's betrayal was made greatly rich with prophetic utterance. Not only did He assure the disciples of His personal return, but He also promised the Holy Spirit as an abiding Comforter, and continued Revealer. "I have many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth for He shall not speak from Himself. . . . He shall glorify *Me* for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16: 12-14).

Such was the remarkable promise regarding the things they were not then able to receive, but which were later to be imparted. Slow were the disciples to grasp the significance of this, our Lord's last promise and bequest. Even yet the Church fails to appreciate the prominent place God's communion with men is intended to occupy in the Christian dispensation. We are like the ancients. They believed that men anywhere, everywhere, could communicate with God. There was no trouble about that. Heathen and Hebrew alike believed that much. For where no definite teaching had been received, intuition reached to God, and man's slower thinking followed his intuition in the right direction. But concerning God's communications

to men it was different. That was regarded as a special experience; requiring a special place, special circumstances, and a special type or order of man. For example, in the Mosaic dispensation Jehovah appointed a definite place of meeting where He would communicate with His people—at a certain time—and through a certain person.

“And Thou shalt put the Mercy-seat above, upon the ark; and in the ark Thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy-seat, from between the two Cherubim . . .” (Ex. 25: 21, 22).

Observe, this is not the place where men went to commune with God. They could do that from the Judean hills, or from a foreign land, but this is the place where God comes to them. “There I will meet thee” and “I will commune with thee.” Only the High Priest, indeed, could ever see the Shekinah glory. All others were excluded from the Holy of Holies, and even the High Priest could enter it but once a year—and then with washings, and robings, and sacrifices special. All was special, even the name “Jehovah” was rarely pronounced by the Jew. It was regarded too sacred. Such was the distance and rarity of God’s communications to men. Hebrew history had often been brightened by messages and visits from God, only it must be observed, these visits were regarded as special. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph received visitations from the spirit world. God spake with Moses face to face, till his countenance “shone”

with reflected glory. Israel was guided through the wilderness by a pillar of fire which they knew to be luminous with Jehovah's presence, yet the people said, "Let not God speak to us lest we die." In dreams and visions of the night God had come to Samuel, and Nathan, and Solomon. All the prophets were spirit-moved, "For holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." But in all this the common people had no part. They were not ready for it. They were afraid. Prophet, priest, and seer, could come to them with God's messages, but they expected none themselves. If any man ever enjoyed such an experience he was forthwith elevated to a new status, and separated from the people by his experience.

But not forever was such a condition of things to last. God has continually been coming nearer to men. The woman at the well by her question indicated what the condition of the past had been. Jesus by His answer portrayed what that of the future should be. Where ought men to worship? Neither at Jerusalem nor in this mountain especially, but "the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." Not in bleeding and burning sacrifices on any special altar, but universally with a pure heart. The Temple shall be destroyed, its altar abolished, its sacrifices discontinued, but the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Symbol and type had pointed to a universal reality, and now the world was to awake to its presence. Our Lord's prophecy began to be felt from the moment of its

utterance. Its fuller significance burst upon men at Pentecost, but had it not been for the Stephens, and Philips, the Apostles, and more especially Paul, we should have continued to think of it as something special, for a special class of persons; as indeed we do; and even yet scarcely realize that God is trying to hold personal communion with us all.

We learn the alphabet, that we may read His written Oracles. We cultivate our senses that nature's mystic meaning may come upon us working the magic of its subtle beauty. But we do not appreciate the fact that He who speaks indirectly to us, through nature, and the prophets, is waiting to speak to us Himself. Were we but ready to give Him audience, we too surely should receive communications from Him.

What Moses saw, prepared him for the message from the burning bush. But every bush is "aflame with God," and every saint prepared, may hold audience with the King. The startling truth is, God wishes to speak to every man. This is the meaning of Pentecost, and the fulfilment of Joel's noble prophecy, "And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." That is, shall receive from God communication by a spiritual intercourse. "And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaidens (*i. e.*, the humble and uncultured people) in those days will I pour out My spirit" (Joel 2: 28, 29).

This remarkable prophecy would mean nothing if it referred to a few special messages to a few select persons. That was common to the past. It would mean less than it does if it referred merely to the experience of the disciples at Pentecost. It has a wider application, and refers to a more universal outpouring of God's spirit upon men.

Nor does it refer to some *unconscious* coming of God to His people. Such an interpretation is inadequate. It would not fulfil the terms of the prophecy. It is only as consciousness awakens to truth, that revelation becomes possible. No age has been without Divine revelation. Yet the age of the Spirit, according to promise and prophecy, should exceed all others in such bestowment. Our appreciation of the written revelation must not obscure the fact of Universal revelation. The Sacred oracles as special and unique have a place all their own, but they attest earlier, and predict wider revelations, and declare that the same Spirit who inspired these pages is finally given as the indwelling Presence to every believer. Scarcely should it require argument to show that revelation of God must be continuous. That is implied in personal development; and in the diversity of individuality. It is implied in all advance, and enlightenment, whatsoever. Every new truth and law of the universe enlarges and enriches our conception of God. Nor do we appreciate at their true worth Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, Newton and La Place, unless we perceive this. If revelation was once possible at any time, or anywhere, it must always be an operative principle; else the

unity of the universe would be disproved. But coming to closer quarters with our Lord's direct promise we have the assurance that "When He, the Spirit of truth is come He will guide you into all truth." This promise is made to all God's people and refers to *spiritual* revelation. Until "all truth" is discovered He is to be our guide, effecting within us conviction of sin when we are morally wrong; granting us wisdom in intellectual perplexity; bestowing comfort and peace where each is required; and remaining with us as God's own Life. As though to meet the very inertia which regards God, who once spoke to men, as now altogether voiceless, the closing book of Scripture represents Him as appealing to be heard. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and will open the door I will come in." Not to the unconverted was that Laodicean message sent. It was addressed to God's own people who were keeping Him out of their lives just as we are. What more graphic portrayal of God's desire to commune familiarly with us could be imagined? What more accurate indication of our cold indifference to His advance? We keep Him knocking, knocking, and will not be persuaded that we could "hear His voice" if we wished to; nor do we really believe that our communion is inter-communion, a true "fellowship" with God.

Now, in order that these spiritual communications should be intelligible, it is not necessary that a voice should break the vibrant air, nor that God should speak in any particular language, but that the

Eternal should make Himself understood by us unmistakably. "And God spake to Moses." How? Not always by an audible voice. God spake to Samuel also, and in such a way that he heard what Eli could not hear, though both dwelt in the same tabernacle. Paul knew not whether he was in the body or out of it, but he received the message, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (Vide 2 Cor. 12). And even when the audible voice was perfectly clear to him, as at his conversion on the Damascus road, to others it was not intelligible. All that revelation requires is that God should impress His thought upon a human soul. It may be by voice and vision, or it may not be. It may be accompanied by fire and whirlwind and earthquake; or it may be by a still small voice within—but we recognize it as God's. Because spiritual intercourse is immediate it must frequently be an indefinable consciousness. It may be through impression, or conviction, but it comes with the assurance that God is speaking. Thus we are sure that it is not some other voice, nor merely our own thinking, but rather a Voice that speaks with authority.

Conscience helps us with our spiritual speech. It knows in an imperfect way the Voice of God and impresses *all* men with that feeling; but surely "he who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High" ought to know and understand it more freely than he whose ear is not alert for messages from God, and in whose heart expectancy is not alive. Why was it written "Son of Man, all the words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart and hear

with thine ears" ? (Ezek. 3: 10). Was it not because receiving from God is as important a part of communion as speaking to Him ? Without it the act is incomplete, the blessing not received, the heavenly intelligence not imparted. Some one has said that "listening is an art." But of all the forms of hearing, seeing and knowing, the highest and most delicate is spiritual. Now, regarding spiritual perception, one of the most instructive examples is that of the youthful Samuel. To all who would hear God's voice his experience affords three important lessons.

(a) A certain preparation of the heart is the first essential. For in 1 Sam. 3: 7, it is written of that dead age—"And the word of the Lord was precious (rare) in those days; there was no open vision." But in Samuel God found a heart to which He could speak.

(b) Samuel needed help to understand God. "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord," *i. e.*, in this way. But he listened to Eli, and Eli, unable to hear God himself, told the boy what to expect, and what to do. So we need besides expectancy, familiarity with God's written revelation that we may be prepared for His inner voice.

(c) In all spiritual things development is possible. Experience teaches. To be prepared and expectant are the earliest essentials. The rest will follow naturally. When it was said the word of the Lord was "revealed" unto Samuel, the Hebrew figure concealed in the word may be thus expressed, "The ear of Samuel was uncovered for the Lord," a phrase which implies that if our ears were open

for the experience we should better hear our Master's voice. Oh! let us no longer hesitate to believe it. Much contemplation of, and communion with God, has true transforming power. Enoch "walked with God," and so became meet for translation. Moses "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." One cannot be much with God without having the sense of God grow upon him; and so better coming to understand Him. This was as true of Edwards, Baxter, Knox, Whitefield, and Luther, as of Paul and John the beloved disciple. So indeed, will it be for all who earnestly crave close companionship with God. Oh! would that all Christian believers were prepared to say with trustful, obedient Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Among the higher stages of God's communion with His people dream and vision once received recognition. Whether spiritual experiences have been withheld from sleep, as our skeptical age seems to assume, or whether it is especially fitted for that purpose, are questions not without interest. Because we deem sleep a receptive period, we shall consider it now.

XVI

COMMUNION IN SLEEP

MAN has not been slow to avail himself of nature's forces for the repair and restoration of the body. At regular intervals he submits himself to their replenishment, and acknowledges that without their ministry he would soon become a physical and mental wreck. Young's brief description:

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

is more scientific than poetical. The wear, the strain, the attrition of activity, constituted a drain upon muscular and nervous energy. When recumbent, a man's respiration and circulation are slower than when standing erect. There is a difference of about four beats per minute. By placing himself in the hands of nature's restoring forces, gravitation quells the tempest of his blood, and there is calm. Slow measured respiration permits oxygen to come to the rescue of the depleted life-current, and all night long increases the capital represented by red blood corpuscles. Magnetic and electric currents play upon him, helping to arrange the disordered nerve centres and to strengthen their structure, for the next day's strain. So that the man who was weary last night arises refreshed and rehabilitated. The regardless may not know it, but thoughtful persons are aware, that forces not his

own have been at work upon his organism, and have lent their might to increase his force.

Not otherwise is it in regard to man's higher nature. His mind has an environment as surely as his body; else despair would be as healthful as hope. Sleep is self-surrender to powers above, and about us; whose influence we feel, even when unconscious of their source. An old author of repute writing half a century ago raises the query, "Do we ever pray in our sleep?" But answers in doubtful mood, thinking that because we "are unconscious in sleep" therefore prayer is improbable. Had he put his question differently the correct response would have been more apparent. "Is there communion between God and man in sleep?" To that question at least a few would respond in the affirmative. Jacob, and Samuel, and prophets many; Peter, and Ananias, and Paul, received messages in their sleep. And most surely if such communion should come to us from above it would afford us most welcome help in our times of doubt and perplexity. Certain it is that often we lie down at night distressed, hemmed in, undecided, our way dark and obstructed; but we awake at peace for the light has come. We are resolved what to do, and we go straight forward, forgetful of last night's distress, unthinking of the great change that has come over us, satisfied merely, or perhaps grateful, that we are no longer in doubt, but seeking no explanation; unconscious that God came to us, as to Jacob, and that the place is a Bethel. Yet our tangle did not straighten itself out; nor was it

something we did ourselves; it was something done for us. That such experiences are in accord with spiritual laws is equally certain. That they are altogether too rare is our reproach. Many of us would be glad if we only thought about it, to have God come to us in our sleep but do we expect it?

Without being dogmatic, it seems safe to say that physical theories are inadequate to account for all the phenomena of sleep. Whereas it is commonly supposed that the mind like the body is quiescent in sleep, ample testimony is available to prove that not infrequently it is then most active. Thought is not always disordered, and fortuitous, as in the phantasy of our lighter dreams. It often is most logical and cogent. The mathematician solves in his sleep, problems quite beyond the grasp of his wakeful thinking. The inventor pursues his research in sleep, untrammelled by waking preconceptions, and produces for the benefit of the race, what never before had been thought out. Literature has produced many examples of the mind's extraordinary activity during the unconsciousness of sleep. "Robinson Crusoe" owes its existence to the night thoughts of Defoe. "Rienzi" was the "dream offspring" of Lord Lytton's brain. "Westward Ho" came to Kingsley in his sleep. Edgar Allen Poe's remarkable poem, "The Bells," is said to have been composed in his sleep. Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn" remains unfinished, because after awaking from the sleep in which it was composed, his memory failed him before he could

“dash off” the whole poem, and he was never able to complete it.

Rev. W. Williams in his “Personal Reminiscences of Charles Haddon Spurgeon” recounts a singular experience of the celebrated Divine which Spurgeon himself narrated to the students of his college.

“He had visited the death-bed of a valued member of the Tabernacle, and had received from him a text with the request that it should be the basis of the sermon for the coming Sunday morning. It was no unusual thing for the great preacher to obtain his messages for the people in this way, and the promise was readily made. To get the sermon out of the text proved to be a task of extraordinary difficulty, and after many fruitless attempts, carried forward until late on the Saturday night, he was advised to retire to rest with the promise of an early call, and in the hope that in the dawning of the Sabbath the needed light would come. He was not awakened until the usual hour for rising, and began to complain that the promise had been broken, when he was asked to listen to a few notes on the text which were read from manuscript in the reader’s hand. With eager delight he exclaimed, ‘Why that’s the very thing I want. Where did you get it?’ He was then informed that *he had preached the sermon during the night while soundly sleeping*, and his congregation of one had acted as reporter” (pp. 154, 156).

It is well known that the sleep-walker, or somnambulist, exhibits at times more vitality and energy

than he is capable of in his waking state. His physical feats especially in dangerous places are quite remarkable. Though his eyes are closed "he seems to have in that state perceptions supernaturally acute. . . . What is more marvellous he will write with critical accuracy in prose and verse; he will compose music; he will choose from among many specimens those best adapted to the most delicate work, with a promptness and decision of which, when awake, he would be wholly incapable."¹

In sleep the human will is completely surrendered; yet what Wilkinson calls "organic thought" goes on. "Concordantly with this," says he, "our thoughts and judgments are marvellously cleared and arranged during that state; as though a reason more perfect than reason, and uninfluenced by its partialities, had been at work when we were in our beds."²

Much of the same import is familiar to us all. The significant fact is that the unconscious thought of profound sleep is both connected with our past life, and has a bearing on its future. Moreover, as though sleep had "an inward monitor," we rarely hesitate to draw a strong line of demarcation between the phantasmagoria of the border-land sleep which immediately precedes awakening, and the occasional messages of deeper sleep. There are dreams, and dreams. Most of them pass with the sleep in which they live, or are speedily forgotten.

¹ Bigelow, "The Mystery of Sleep," p. 31.

² Dr. J. J. G. Wilkinson, "Treatise on the Human Body."

But not all. Our impressions gained in sleep, often exert a profound influence upon present conduct, and upon future destiny. They come as warnings, or incentives to action. Nor should this be thought wonderful. If Egypt's safety rested upon the dreams of Joseph, and his interpretation of Pharoah's dreams; if our Saviour's safety, and that of the Magi depended on warnings given in dreams, why should it be deemed impossible that similar means should be used to-day in communicating answers to earnest prayer. If it be true that "The criminal in his sleep commits crimes," is it not probable that a devout soul in his sleep communes with God?

On one hand devotional literature, ancient and modern, is rich with references to spiritual experiences, comforting, enlightening, and supporting, obtained in the stillly watches of the night. On the other hand (and this is equally, if not more significant, for the point under consideration) crime-haunted beings and all with guilty consciences find the still hours terrible. Why so? If it be not that God and man are closer face to face in the sleeping thought. The phenomena of a bad conscience, and the criminal's dread of approaching sleep, speak strongly in favour of the theory that contact with God is possible in sleep.

Let me quote in further evidence an incident narrated in the life of George Muller. "When he wanted a site for his orphanage near Bristol he called on Mr. Perry the owner of Ashley Down. Perry was not at home. Mr. Muller then went down to Mr. Perry's office, but again missed him.

Pausing then to reflect that perhaps something hinged upon this double disappointment he resolved to wait till the next day before pursuing the matter further. This he did and next morning found the owner at home. On being ushered into his sitting-room Mr. Perry said, 'Ah! Mr. Muller, I know what you have come to see me about; you want to buy my land on Ashley Down. I had a dream last night and I saw you come in to purchase my land for which I have been asking £200 per acre; but the Lord told me not to charge you more than £120 per acre, and therefore if you are willing to buy at that price the matter is settled.' And within ten minutes the contract was signed."¹

No one doubts that such experiences have occurred. Since the Scriptures are given for our guide, we may feel that similar singular messages must be rare; but the question does God's spirit commonly move on ours in sleep is worth serious consideration. We are not anxious to prove that it does. In the nature of the case only personal experience could avail to attest or disprove the theory. But the Scriptures reveal that God has not infrequently visited man in the night watches, with messages of supreme moment. Psychological data indicate that the mind is impressionable in sleep, and some students who have studied the question believe with Iamblicus, that —

"The night-time of the body is the daytime of the soul."

In "The Mystery of Sleep" Mr. Bigelow argues

¹ Pierson, "George Muller of Bristol," p. 407.

that "we are developed spiritually during our sleeping hours as distinctly and as exclusively as we are developed physically and intellectually during our waking hours" (p. 4).

Dante is recorded as saying, the mind in sleep,

"Almost prophetic in its vision is."

The Psalms contain many references to prayer and meditation during the "night watches." David, like Jacob, realized that God "visited" him "in the night." Moreover, the great Pentecostal awakening which was to usher in the dispensation of the Spirit, was prophetically described so as to attract attention to a supernatural intercourse from which our sleeping hours are not excluded. "And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall *dream dreams*, your young men shall *see visions*" (Joel 2: 28).

Does it mean that the spirit's outpouring is to affect even the sleep of God's people? It widens the scope of communion, and adds new interest to sleep, to feel that this is intended. Assuredly too, the soul does not need the kind of rest the body requires. Our immortal part cannot weary. It will not want sleep in the land where there is "no night." What the soul does need is precisely what could be imparted by spiritual intercourse—peace and comfort, wisdom and strength. If sleep is divinely intended for spiritual purposes, so that, abstracted from the things of sense and time, the soul may receive the impress of God, then answers to

prayer may be expected in the night seasons. He who retires with the prayer "Let holy thoughts be ours when sleep o'ertakes us," and surrenders his soul to heavenly intercourse, expecting impressions while asleep, will surely not always awake disappointed. Thus also sleep will be redeemed from merely physical uses, and devoted to spiritual renewal. Moreover not one-third of our time will be vacant of communion, but in reality we shall "pray without ceasing."

One important truth remains for our consideration. So easy is it to misinterpret our impressions, that great care must be exercised in this regard. F. B. Meyer¹ gives three tests for recognizing answers to prayer.

- (1) They must be in line with God's Word.
- (2) Granted under the Spirit's influence.
- (3) Attested by providential leading.

Accepting this threefold gauge, serious and consecrated persons will not be misguided, nor will they rudely step on holy ground. So far as the vulgar and regardless multitude are concerned, who consult "dream-books," and fortune-tellers, to unravel the tangle of unconsecrated dreaming, such folly should not deter the saints of God from availing themselves of privileges divinely provided for them, nor mislead us in the study of a real problem. For "whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him."

¹"Christain Living," pp. 49, 50.

XVII

THE THREE MYSTERIES OF PRAYER

ALL mystery whatsoever confronting humanity is due to partial knowledge. Before anything can become a mystery it must be apprehended at some point—must so present itself to the mind as to form a rational subject of inquiry. Thus, imagination is distinguished from fancy. Imagination works among the real; while the children of fancy are “fanciful,” because they hold no relation to reality. The term “mystery,” therefore applies neither to the delusions of the insane, nor to the ungoverned phantasy of the sane; but to problems presented to our intelligence by actual experience. Even this statement is a little wide because man is more than a thinking being. He is also emotional, æsthetic, moral and religious. And his every faculty constitutes an avenue to some phase of truth. Every part of his nature also, except the religious, is universally accredited trustworthy. Even the religious sensibility is distrusted but by a minority. It is conceded that a man approaches completeness according as his whole manifold nature is developed. But his emotional life may (indeed must) present phenomena not to be passed upon by cold reason. And he feels that he would be unreasonable were he to confine the flow of his emotions to these things alone which his reason had mastered. Consequently

real experience involves problems which reason alone is inadequate to investigate. It must be content to sit as but one judge on the bench, guarding against irrational thought, but listening respectfully where the æsthetic or emotional or religious "voices" are alone competent to deliver judgment. Our security is found in their harmony of judgment. For violence will not in our day be suffered by reason. Nor, if we are true to ourselves by any other part of our nature. The whole man must face a complete experience, and be true to himself throughout.

Coming back therefore to our original statement, a mystery is something which impinges upon our nature at some point, but is largely unknown. For this reason we may say of the greater problems pressing upon us, they are *unfathomable* rather than mysterious. On all hands we touch intelligible points, but never limits. We apprehend, though we cannot *comprehend*, the truth—because a finite mind conceives, but cannot measure the Infinite. The segment feels in itself the nature of the circle, and is unsatisfied with its partial condition. The mystery enveloping an immortal soul represents the otherwise inexpressible hunger of its nature. It is evidence at once of the nature of our being, and of the particular part of our character which is most developed—or mayhap most hungry. Without its oppressive "delight" there could have been no Galileo, no Newton, no Augustine, no Columbus, no Edison. Without its inspiration, no mathematics nor astronomy; no geology nor chemistry; no phi-

losophy nor science, nor religion. There is that about and above us that is drawing our manhood to fuller stature. In so far as we respond to it, we are being prepared for a higher and a larger life here, and hereafter. Viewed in relation to prayer, mystery presents three chief problems —

I. Is communion with God possible?

II. What relation does prayer hold to natural law?

III. Answers to prayer, or the Divine operation in communion.

The first problem touches *philosophy*, the second *science*, the third *religion*.

I. Is communion with God possible? This question involves the existence of God. And its answer is involved in the existence and nature of man.

In part, I am of the earth, earthy, but not wholly. I am more than a vegetable, more than a mere animal. More, and higher, by virtue of superior endowments. Again, I find that my corporeal nature is correlated to my physical environment. It could not exist otherwise, nor could the extraneous world otherwise become known to me.

Again, I find correlative to my reason a whole world of mathematical, logical, and intellectual truths which are not only trustworthy, but seem to be necessarily true. In other words, I am so much a part of the universe that I can trust both it and my knowledge of it. Further, my emotional and æsthetic nature is neither isolated nor deceived. It also finds a correspondence without, true to it, and satisfying. Coming now to my intuition of

God, and my spiritual experience, I feel that if I trust every other part of my nature, I ought to trust this also. The only way to get rid of this mystery who presses Himself upon me (evoking reverence and trust) is to get rid of myself, because *I* am the correlative to Him. And I am a fact, a reality. Every faculty, and part, of my whole being brings me into touch with Him, so that my intuition of God has the testimony of all my other powers, in a varied experience. No mystery is greater than the mystery of *my being*; because to account for me requires what is God—the absolute, to which I am relative and related. Consequently the objection that my intuition may be delusive,—a mere subjective fancy is fallacious. Because (1) The intuition of God comes, and always has come to all men—just as the truths of mathematics come to all, and so fit our thinking that for a whole race we have but one mathematic. We need for intelligible thinking (independently altogether of dependence, love, trust, etc.) an Absolute, as much as we do a logic, or an arithmetic. God is essential to a complete conception of the Universe. (2) *I* am more than my subjective conception, I am an object, a fact, an entity. And it is *I*, the entity (not my imagination) that am related, through the whole of my being, to the Absolute I apprehend. It is not my thought alone, but myself that stands as a living demonstration of the God, without which I could not be.

Finally the affinity of nature which enables me to be conscious of God, and the vital correspondence

between us, by which my manifold life is sustained, *is in itself communion.*

II. The relation of prayer to natural law.

It is objected that "Because all nature is subject to the reign of law, there is practically no room for prayer."

Further, it is asserted, "Since God has planned the universe perfectly there is no *need* of prayer."

Moreover it is maintained that "If man's petition could move God, and He should disturb the existing order it would result in confusion or world-wide wreckage."

Furthermore, objectors ask, "Is it not a higher conception of God to believe that He will do all things well, than to feel that it is necessary to intrude our preferences and opinions upon Him?"

If such reasoning presented no real difficulty it could be ignored; but for thoughtful people these problems must be met, and the pathway cleared for reason. The *whole* man must find God. Reason is but part of His being, yet is so completely trusted, that any obstruction to it readily proves a barrier to all the rest of his nature. To commence then, it must be acknowledged that the universe is subject to "the reign of law" otherwise it would not be a universe. All knowledge and all order would be impossible. It is only because natural forces are uniform, *i. e.*, subject to definite laws that we can control them. Again, by experience we learn that all forces are not of the same order. Lower forces being always dominated by higher—and all by the highest. For example, gravitation makes way for

the superior force of life. Without violence or breach of law mighty trees from little acorns rise. Life resident in vegetation represents a higher order of force than gravitation. And so the orders rise through the vegetable and animal kingdoms, till we come to man, who represents a type of force superior to any found in the three kingdoms below him. Smaller he may be, and physically less powerful than the brute, nevertheless by virtue of a higher life he holds "dominion over the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field."

In nature, physical laws obtain; but men are governed by ethical ideals; and are conscious of moral responsibility. We chip and chisel marble, burn forests, and slay game; our will being the measure of our destruction; but not so is it with one another. Free agency imposes upon individuals a new set of rules. In the family these attain their highest perfection, because justice is supplemented by love, and "the reign of law" becomes a more perfect experience. But the home is a place of intercourse. In it are found petition and confession, thanksgiving and intercession—all these and all having their rightful place. Lispering childhood and tottering age bear their share in a mutual inter-communion. The father to the best of his ability purposes the highest things for his household, and so far as he is concerned, would do the best, without a word or sign from them—but it would not then be the joyful home that it is. Moreover, it is necessary for the children's sake that intelligent and loving "communion" exist between parent and child. So with

our Heavenly Father, intercourse was not instituted, if we may say so reverently, for His sake, though heaven could not be heaven without it, but for our sake. By communion we do not change His purpose, but we do find our true place and gain our needed instruction and help. That is the intention of prayer; not to dethrone Deity by rude hands, but by prayerful, loving surrender of our wills to His, to obtain light, and grace sufficient for our day. Prayer is not dictation. Woeful indeed is the idea that communion with God is "giving advice!" That conception must be dislodged. Prayer implies acquiescence in superior wisdom, and trust to superior love. It is intercourse with a real Father about matters in which His interests, and ours, are never divergent. "*The best*" is always also *our best*, but we have need of light from above by which to discern what is "the best," and in getting it we are always "walking with God."

But *can* God modify His laws to benefit an individual? The shortest answer is, *men do so*, therefore God can. God made the world, but man is remaking it. Yesterday there stood a mountain. To-day a railway company casts it into the sea. Yonder there lay, recently, a pestilent swamp. Now there stands a healthful city. Here is a rock in the garden. A toddler cannot move it. He says, "Papa, throw this stone away," and the father does it. The only miracle worked is the common one of a superior force overcoming an inferior one. In the phraseology of G. J. Romanes, "If the human mind can do so much as it does in the way of

directing the natural forces, how inconceivably immense must be the ability of the final directive intelligence, transcending as it does so immeasurably its mere human analogue." Or as our Lord would have us reason, "If ye then, being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." And in doing so, He no more disturbs the "reign of law" than the father who manipulates the affairs of his household for the best interests of his family.

Finally, a God who should manage all things for His children without communion with them would not be "Our Father who is in heaven," nor would He have very affectionate children. All that is beautiful and joyful, all that is loving and trustful, all that makes up our conception of piety and holiness would be wanting. Peace and comfort and consolation and tenderness would all be lost and some other god put in the place of Him whom we now adore; and whose Infinite Love calls forth our reverence and devotion. Any man who has found the secret of prayer by holy experience knows its worth. Only from the outside, where this is unknown, can there be any doubt of its reality or its preciousness.

III. The real mystery of prayer however is its religious mystery. It begins where doubt and mis-giving end. And its kindly light leads farther on to profounder depths and to heights sublimer ever.

This great theme will constitute a chapter by itself.

XVIII

THE SUPREME MYSTERY OF PRAYER

AFTER, however, reason has been convinced that prayer is neither irrational, nor inconsistent with natural law, its supreme problem still remains. The removal of these restraints but clears the way, and affords the needed confidence, whereby other parts of our nature may enter upon their normal experience. Only when the demands of reason have been satisfied can we *trust* ourselves sufficiently to enjoy or examine our reverence and love, our faith and hope, our obligation to holiness and self-sacrifice. Trust our faculties we must before we can learn their powers. Of mystery in general it may be said, all *life* is a mystery. Even our natural existence, our thought, and volition, defy explanation. The universe, and the mind that contemplates it are both mysteries, but both realities. Hence we are conscious of real mysteries—not haunted by hallucinations.

Of the religious mystery, we may observe that it presents no distressful problem. Almost all the terror which once haunted the mysterious has been removed. And every day's advance makes it more comfortable for us to dwell in the presence of what mystery remains. Beautifully, is the satisfaction of a heart dwelling at the core of all mystery, expressed by Browning:

“ The acknowledgment of God in Christ,
 Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
 All questions in the earth and out of it,
 And has so far advanced thee to be wise.”

Once we feel, or rather *are* absolutely secure, all remaining mystery becomes an inheritance inexhaustible, for the gratification of our mystery-loving nature. Eternal life signifies eternal development. Part of our existence lies before us, to be enriched by a growing experience. As sin is the proof of a prior virtue, so incompleteness is a prophecy of future completion.

In Browning's phrase:

“ Imperfection means perfection hid,
 Reserved in part to grace the after-time.”

Beyond the range of finite mind there will always be a realm of mystery, but the amazing extension of knowledge in the spheres of science, philosophy, and religion, recently achieved, affords encouragement to seekers, and gives zest to exploration.

The mystery we would examine has a practical as well as a theoretical side. It has to do with God's answers to prayer; His silence or rejection of petitions; and the mode of His operation.

Are all prayers answered? This question is best met indirectly, because so many Christians think of prayer as merely petition, and of answers as the bestowment of *things* asked for; consequently they naturally feel their prayer has been rejected if the specified blessing asked for be not granted. So narrow a view of communion with God vitiates

even the part of it about which they are thinking.¹ So that in reply to the question, "Is every prayer answered?" we reply, No prayer is lost. Every sincere approach to God is fruitful of good. In that sense every prayer is "answered." All who yield themselves to God so completely as to desire what He wills, are getting precisely that, as fast as time passes, and as fully as they obey His laws and His leading. So long as a man stands on the outside of God's will, disobeying His law, an alien to His life, asking for things to gratify lust or selfish ambition, that is not prayer; that is either deliberate or unconscious mockery. Yet much of the Christian world has to be rescued from this ignoble misconception, and this dishonourable practice.

To the most trustful and acquiescent, however, there is sometimes an apparent silence of God trying to the soul. We know our communion with God is not broken; we feel we are obeying His laws; and further, believe the particular matter under prayer to be in line with His will; yet we are kept waiting, waiting, in disappointment and perhaps in distress. Why does not God rescue my son? Why does He not deliver me from the injustice that is spoiling my life? Why have I to suffer in sickness, or poverty, or undeserved humiliation? No human voice can answer why. But any life fully surrendered to do, or to bear, according as He wills, shall surely find profit in the waiting; and will surely show forth the praise of God by patient endurance.

¹ *Vide*, pp. 16, 17.

“He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.” Again, “It is sufficient that the servant be as his Lord.”

Your prayer will be answered either in terms of its utterance, or in the higher terms of God's wisdom. Paul's experience affords a case in point. Thrice prayed he that the “thorn” might be removed, yet for answer received not deliverance therefrom, but assurance of grace sufficient to bear its piercing. And the sufferer here records “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, *that the strength* of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Yes, all prayer is answered, or to be more accurate all communion is profitable. To conceive the amplitude of its benefit, one must perceive that it affects the whole range of human powers, conferring precisely, what is needful to each. It is a vitalizing force—a means to re-creation and inspiration, to wisdom and comfort, to usefulness and power, to beauty of character, and growth of personality.

But how is all this affected? Is it possible to trace the operation of the Divine mind upon the human mind? Or to put the question more broadly, and more truly, can we better understand how God's manifold life, power, and wisdom, influence human lives, in thought, feeling and conduct?

Three lines of research bear upon this interesting subject; Psychological, Scriptural, and Experimental.

1. Let us pursue the Psychological first, since any light on this department will aid us both in understanding Scriptural phraseology, and in the inter-

pretation of our practical experience. It has already been shown that man is inter-related with the universe; and spiritually related to God. If we could conceive this latter relation more accurately we might perceive more truly how benefit accrues from communion. Psychology, Ethics and Theology (especially recent expositions of "The Atonement") compel recognition of a spiritual Kingdom. Personality implies more than personal. "Personal" therefore and "Spiritual" are not interchangeable terms, because the latter means more than we ascribe to the former, and gives it a significance not often recognized. In addition to "personal" characteristics — *e. g.*, intelligence and volition, the term spiritual implies imminence and power. When we say that the universe is pervaded or inter-penetrated by spirit, of course the language and symbolism are inadequate. For it must seem incongruous to bring the attributes of spirit and the qualities of matter together in relation. Yet precisely this fact is exemplified in every human being. It is not meaningless to say that spirit permeates the entire human organism. It is mind that unifies man's complex powers enabling conscience to sit as arbiter upon all his deeds. You cannot segregate a man into departments. When he acts it is the whole man, physical, mental, and moral who acts. If his mind should operate without control, we would pronounce him insane; if his hand should move without his consent we would declare him diseased. The whole man is normally amenable to conscience and therefore wholly spirit dominated. To illustrate from more

distant fields, science declares that forces magnetic, electric, gravitational, etc., play through the human body, just as light penetrates water; and that ether and probably other subtle powers are all pervasive. These facts and hypotheses help us to conceive that the spiritual realm is also all pervasive or rather Omnipresent. So that the relations between God and man are not narrowly "personal" but widely spiritual. Indeed even among men, we are coming to learn through the phenomena of hypnotism and telepathy that human minds have a subtle spiritual influence upon each other transcending what is termed "personal" intercourse. These *outer* facts imply yet deeper inner truth. A spirit is not an isolated being. There is a spiritual realm. Relations therein are personal, indeed, but are determined by something of universal import. That is, there are universal law and universal intercourse, constituting ethical relations and values. What is ethical consequently, is at once personal and universal. God's relation is not an outer but an inner relation to man. Personal as recognizing man's individuality, it is universal and inclusive.

It is this principle which makes sin an invasion, not of an individual alone, but of the whole spiritual realm—and a universal offense. It is this principle that makes conscience a protest for the whole universe against the last and least item of sin's hateful enormity. It is this principle that makes an "Atonement" of universal import and worth, necessary. In the light of this truth we can understand how "The Lamb of God was slain from the foun-

dation of the world." Thus, too, the imminence of God takes on new significance. It is not mere presence. It is—vital, operative, redemptive, ethical. Thus communion holds a wider and deeper and nearer significance than is commonly conceived. We cannot express all that is implied, but we can say dismissing all figures, that "we live and move and have our being" in God. That He dwelleth in us. And that the Spirit Himself witnesseth with our spirit. Conscience and consciousness, ethics and religion attest that communion with God is *immediate and spiritual*.

2. Regarding Scriptural reference to the mystery of communion. Austin Phelps says—"To a right-minded man some of the most astonishing passages in the Bible are the mysterious declarations and hints of the residence of the Holy Spirit in a human soul. We must stand in awe, before any just conception of the meaning of such passages as these, 'The Spirit of God dwelleth in you,' 'God dwelleth in us,' 'Ye are the temple of God,' 'The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,' 'Full of the Holy Ghost,' 'Filled with all the fullness of God,' 'Praying in the Holy Ghost,' 'With all prayer in the spirit,' 'The spirit itself maketh intercession for us.'"

But the mysteriousness of such language should not surprise us. Its mystery is only the measure of its depth. It is the reality which it expresses that is amazing. A holy prayer is the spirit of God speaking through the infirmities of the human soul. "We scarcely utter hyperbole, in saying that prayer is the Divine Mind communing with itself, through

finite wants, through the woes of helplessness, through the clinging instincts of weakness. On this side of the judgment no other conception of the Presence of God is so profound as that which is realized in our souls every time we offer a genuine prayer. God is then not only *with* us but *within* us."¹

3. Experimentally it may be said that few have dared to test the extent to which they may be conscious of Divine operations on the soul. Yet this is our privilege, and may be more largely enjoyed if we will but look into it. "It is God that *worketh* in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." In other words, God not only dwelleth within the human temple but *moves* it to will, and to love, to pity, and to exercise beneficence. The Almighty is resident in men not as a holy presence merely, but as a powerful motive force. He is in the personality whom He is perfecting, what He is in the wider universe—its informing and dominating potency. Not indeed as impersonal forces are in the material world; but as the admitted and acknowledged Lord over His own free sons and servants. Neither mechanically, nor unconsciously, but by an intercourse independent of words, and subtle beyond language. Accordingly, man's normal spiritual experience is to be *conscious* of God's "working" from within, towards higher life, and divine ideals; not destroying human individuality but expanding and emphasizing it, while more and more infusing it with His own life.

¹ Austin Phelps, "The Still Hour," p. 109.

Illustrations are apt, because but partially illustrative, to be misleading. But to any soul desirous of understanding how complete the divine influence over a human being may be, it will be helpful to draw from the analogy of hypnotism. As it is commonly recognized that under the hypnotic trance a man's thought, feeling, and conduct, are governed by the hypnotist, every suggestion, however, being exaggerated and coloured by the individuality of the subject; so likewise there is a Divine, not hypnotism, but *inspiration* or quickening whereby a renewed, and surrendered life, is thought-governed by God. That it should be so in "crisis" cases was definitely promised by our Lord when He sent forth His disciples "as sheep among wolves." (See Matt. 10:16.) "But when they deliver you up be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Two differences however must be remarked, between human hypnotism and divine inspiration. One is so far abnormal, that it *injures* the individuality of the subject; while the other is a law of normal life, and develops personality. Again, one acts from *without*, and is an interference with freedom; the other works from *within* and is the same power which originated and is perfecting life. Never is a man really sane till he thinks the thought of God, and is thrilled by the power of the deathless life. Moreover, these divine influences working upon us are to this extent ungovernable

that they will not be conquered by reason. They will not submit to the seer, but subdue him; and force him to speak "as a prophet." He is brought to feel truth which once he did not feel, and is impelled to proclaim it.¹

Without doubt spiritual forces play upon us as unceasingly as those of nature. They shine upon us; they rain upon us; they permeate us, and we gravitate under their influence. But spiritual forces, because they affect our intelligence and emotions, our faith and feeling, ought to be more or less perceived in their action. Yet by a law, as prevalent in nature as in grace, they rarely are so unless attentively regarded; and spiritual sensibility be somewhat cultivated. Even the radiant colours and witching harmonies of the natural creation escape many eyes and ears. In spiritual things this was the condemnation of the Hebrews. Having eyes they saw not, and ears that could not, would not hear. But to those who did, He said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear." To this truth it was that Jesus referred when He pronounced the blessed law and the terrible penalty, "Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever hath to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that which he thinketh he hath" (Luke 8: 18).

¹ Vide Ruskin "Beauty and Nature," p. 238.

XIX

THE PRACTICAL POWERS OF COMMUNION

HAVING considered various stages which have marked the development of inter-communion with God, and devoted some attention to the mystery of its operation, it remains now to treat as briefly as may be the practical side of our subject.

Inasmuch as inter-communion is the means to spiritual life, and the source of all power, it must have an application to the daily walk of the individual; and the measure of its influence will be in direct proportion to the perfection of its application. But in this precise regard disappointment must be felt by all who study the subject; for, even among those who love God and enjoy communion, the power of prayer is obstructed by what may be called natural, yet lamentably unfortunate, misconceptions.

Perhaps the most pernicious fallacy haunting trustful souls is an idea that the benefits of prayer are chiefly subjective. This is a "class" mistake branching into as many sub-classes as there are selfish aims in life. One looks upon prayer as the means to personal ends. He uses it chiefly as an instrument to further his ambitions. His devotions are made up largely of petitions for help to achieve influence, wealth, position. That, more than anything else is what he thinks of when upon his knees. A mind of lesser mould may pray every

day for certain things which are deemed desirable to satisfy certain present needs. These wants it is not necessary to mention here. Some of them indeed which we should hesitate to recount anywhere else are specified without hesitation in our intercourse with God. So far can we forget what manner of men we ought to be, that we seek His alliance in matters which plainly are not for His glory. The self is larger than the prayer, and buries the better man.

Then there is the pensive, shrinking soul, untainted by worldly ambition or grosser forms of selfishness, whose thought is nevertheless turned continually within, a religious person intent on still deeper religious experience. She longs for peace and comfort and holy joy; would live in "a sanctuary" rather than "in the world," and is thoughtful of her own condition both for the present and the future. It is easier to condemn the two earlier than the last named class, because so much in the last is essentially desirable. All indeed are partly right because possessions, rank, influence are legitimate. Subjective blessing too represents a half-truth of such moment that there is only one greater. We are not to be possessed by things, but are to possess them. "All things are yours and ye are Christ's." We are to be possessed only by God.

Partly right, all three classes are nevertheless wrong; and wrong for this reason. Prayer is not regarded as a force among forces. Nor is it employed that the worshipper may become a power in the kingdom. All the lines of God's goodness,

those "streams of mercy never ceasing" are desired to run to a single point, and stay there, for the comfort and peace or the gratification of an individual. They are not conceived as coming in on a blessed errand, and passing through to link themselves again to other forces for a larger benefit, more blessed and farther-reaching. Personal benefit instead of being accepted as the first instalment in a wider range of good, which should far exceed its own initial blessing, becomes in fact a "little leaven," which violates the divine intention and the law of its own existence because forthwith it does not commence to "leaven the whole lump."

Prayer, like muscles, levers, belts, pulleys and dynamos, fulfils its mission only when it becomes a working force in the world. Its office is to transmit and apply force. To use the youthful language of Jesus, our Father has "business" to do. Men are His chosen agents; and communion His chosen medium of attachment and intercourse.

Not that all men are voluntary agents; not that all spirits are willing servants. Yet none the less their energy is His capital. They cannot frustrate, but directly or indirectly, they help to evolve His plan. Without doubt Goethe was justified in putting into the mouth of Mephistopheles the sentiment:

" I am
Part of that Power not understood
Which *always wills the bad,*
And *always works the good.*"

No part of the universe and no person in it can be withdrawn from the control of Him who

“Worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,” and who “maketh the wrath of men to praise Him.” It must be a mistake to conceive Satanic injustice as supreme even in the place of torment, because that would be to dethrone God from the realm of punitive justice, and put part of the universe beyond His control.

To what extent men are unconsciously used of God or their ways overruled to further undesigned ends we can never know. That all are, the best as well as the worst, the worst as surely as the best, must be accepted as final truth. This radical difference however obtains between those who live in communion with God, and those who are the unwilling instruments of His will. The former have peace and joy in the Holy Ghost and the end everlasting life; the latter suffer pain here and inherit penalty hereafter. The opposite poles of eternity, and all that lies between, rest on the difference.

To the trustful and true “all things are yours richly to enjoy.” Let it not be supposed therefore from anything previously said that our *subjective* can be divorced from our objective life. There can be no such separation. Therein lies the death of the self-centred soul. Selfishness, by being sin is death. The highest kind of subjective happiness accompanies the highest type of objective power. One is the correlative and coefficient of the other. The altruistic life is the happiest. Exemplified in motherhood, it was personified in Jesus, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister; who

went about doing good, and finally gave His life a ransom for us all. Creed and conduct can no more be separated than heart and hand. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The inner life and its outer manifestation are of a piece.

Now all this results from the fact that a human personality is the meeting point of universal forces. Pouring into him they pour out again, modified less or more by his character much as light is refracted and coloured by the medium through which it passes. Three moments then are distinguishable in the passage of eternal force through a human soul; in other words, there are three moments in personal power.

1. There is the inflow by which God and universal truth impress themselves upon man.

2. The outflow by which man impresses himself upon society, and the material world.

3. The modification which these forces undergo in transmission; due to the individuality, energy, training or lack of training of the person.

To reverse the order we have followed:—As a *medium* man is self-conscious, and self-determinative; retaining his identity amidst a changing environment, and throughout the wonderful development of his personal experience, he is, or he becomes, such and such a character possessing a somewhat definite influence in the eye of God, and in the estimate of his fellows. Put him on the scales and he registers "X" pounds, a weight known precisely by no one except by God. Nevertheless the passing stranger, as well as his bosom

friend, can approximately judge his static condition, his moral worth.

As *passive*, he receives much or little; and enjoys or suffers proportionately to the nature and extent of his experience. His capacity for receiving and enduring must very considerably determine his character and his power as a force in the world.

As *active*, he is not only a force but the greatest recognizable force at work in society. One man may "turn the world upside down," and change the course of history. Indeed history is but biography, plus an explanation.

The lines of God's force are *not broken* in their transmission through a human individuality. Their nearer influence is for him, but their ultimate purpose is to affect others. Distinguishable indeed as subjective and objective, they represent but two moments in one force, two phases of one power. Incarnate in man, and often regarded as merely subjective graces, they are types of Divine power, exerting a positive influence among men.

Every attribute of God transmissible to man falls under his category, and exemplifies this law. And, in all that here follows, let it be carefully observed that the powers which we call human qualities (faith, hope, love, holiness, humility, etc.), become every one of them, what they are, from this governing principle. Each is active, passive, or dispositional, as it represents one of the moments in a force which is transmitted from God to man, and through him, as a medium, may operate upon others.

To present here an elaboration of these Divine-

human graces as "forces" would increase the dimensions of this work beyond our design, and is by no means necessary. The principle may be clearly exemplified by an illustrative outline.

In the finest lyric known in any language, Paul compares "the greatest thing in the world" with knowledge, prophecy, faith, hope, and works. "Prophecies" shall fail; "tongues" shall cease; "knowledge" shall vanish away; but above things that crumble and perish, three there are that abide.

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love."

This trinity or triad of spiritual forces constitutes a unity; one and yet three. Somewhat as a ray of sunshine is a unity, possessing light, heat and chemical powers. Love is an *active* or forthgoing power. Faith *receptive*, *i. e.*, an act of appropriating spiritual truth. Hope is neither active nor passive, but represents a permanent disposition of the mind, or poise of the individual spirit. Separable in thought, these three qualities or graces exist in inseparable union.

But why is love dominant? Why is it written, "and the greatest of these is love"? Because, first, love is eternal—an attribute of Deity—while faith and hope are but finite qualities in no sense applicable to God. Second, love is the source of the other graces. By its normal operation, it generates precisely the qualities which imperfect creatures living amidst temptation and darkness, most need. God's love produces three things in a human life,

1. Love produces faith. That is its reception. He who dowered us with the capacity for faith draws it out by displaying love. Faith has no other genesis. It is "the gift of God," but is called into being by the exhibition of stable good will. As kindness wins confidence, so love manifested, elicits faith. The key passage is John 3: 16, where the relationship between love and faith is clearly disclosed. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever *believeth* on Him should not perish but have eternal life."

2. Love produces love. That is its response; for love quickens love. As it is written, "We love Him because He first loved us."

3. Love produces hope, that is optimism—the inner sense of security amidst the turmoil and apparent uncertainty of things.

Let us glance at each of these powers. For although humanity with one consent recognizes that love is the native response to love, and can be generated in no other way, it is not so generally perceived that faith and hope, the "chemistry and the heat" of spiritual life, come to us with love.

FAITH

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11: 1). Accepting as substantial reality, and positive wealth, what lies beyond the ken of sense and the reach of reason, faith is that exercise of the soul which receives God, and spiritual verities, as present personal possessions. It may be viewed in two ways. (a) In relation to

God, as a factor of prayer; and (b) in relation to the world, as an operative force.

(a) The importance of the place which faith holds in spiritual intercourse will be perceived the moment we recognize that communion is intercommunion, and that faith is our *act of appropriating* spiritual truth and grace. God's bestowments are offered freely. We become powerful in proportion as we make them our own. Men of faith are men of capacity for receiving and using forces which are divinely provided for all. The majority allow these to pass unappropriated. The elect minority, availing themselves of divine potency act for God, or rather allow Him to act through them in extraordinary ways.

(b) This brings us to the point where we see faith as a force. Because it makes a man receptive of God it makes him conqueror over everything alien to God. The human becomes the medium of the Divine. When eternal power operates through a man he is no longer a loose particle on the surface of things, but becomes a part of the universe, so built into it that he stands with God and for God with a power not his own. He becomes as stable as the Throne which God has erected within him. Is he led to the stake? Fire cannot melt the forces which make him immovable. Does he encounter princes and potentates? Unblanched he stands before kings, or meets the rage of tyrants, invincible through a power which has no other explanation. Human frailty becomes an exhibition of Divine stability. "I live, nevertheless not I, but Christ liveth

in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."

HOPE

Hope, we have said, is a static or residential force. Neither forthgoing, nor passive, it represents a permanent disposition or attitude of the mind. Not dependent upon outward circumstances, it invests life with a gladness and confidence aptly expressed by our modern word "optimism."

Both faith and love must have a definite object. Hope is more general. It is to faith something what faith is to reason, less exact but farther-carrying. Consequently its language and vision are more vague, yet its possession makes life buoyant and lightsome, while its absence leaves a soul in lasting shadow. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," said Koheleth, but there is a further stage. Hope extinguished destroyeth life itself. For hopelessness is the path, first to despair, then to suicide. Human beings, like plants, can live only in the light. But the only light adequate to hearten an undying spirit must be eternal. Hope is the standing miracle, which imports into the present the light and glory of the future. Our joys depend not wholly upon what we are, and what we know, but largely upon what we expect to be and to enjoy. The mystery before us is no deterrent to going forward. To a life invested with "the hope of immortality" it is luminous and attractive.

For pessimism, there is no place. For despair, no room. The universe is upward tending.

“God is in heaven, all’s well with the world.”

Had we more of the telescopic vision, which through a rifted tomb can read hope’s celestial meaning, how it would lighten our toil, redeem our drudgery, and lift our flagging spirits!

LOVE

Love is the personal emotion accompanying spiritual outflow and operation. And the triad of graces related therewith may be termed the emotional triad. They represent feeling, sentiment, disposition—that is one side of our spiritual nature.

Love, as a theme is too great for treatment here; and one thought alone shall detain us; namely, this: Man like God, is a spirit. And human love like Divine love is active, a forthgoing of good feeling, a forth-giving of Divine energy, for where love goes all else follows in the terms and measure of love. Imparting His nature, God makes us spiritual magnets. Herein is the key to the gospel method of winning men. Love is the contagion which touches others “till the leaven leavens the whole lump.” Ministers and missionaries, and prophetic spirits everywhere are love-impelled, God-inspired men. The active principle in them is divine,—born of God’s own nature. In other words, even our love for one another is not our own, but rather His love so imparted that He and we act together in its exercise. Furthermore, the extent to which we enjoy using it indicates the degree of divinity within us, and the closeness of the communion whereby

Eternal Power is transmuted into human forms of force.

That the love we bear our Heavenly Father requires for its normal development constant exercise towards His children, needs no reference, for our age is made glorious by its practical beneficence. What does require importunate emphasis is our need to cultivate the hidden life with God. At one time consecrated "units" among men, felt it essential to their higher life to withdraw from "the world" that in monastic seclusion and solitary meditation they might become saintly. Piety was regarded as a subjective possession for the benefit of the individual—and not fraught with imminent responsibility for others. But in our day the loveliness, beauty, and buoyant joyousness of Christianity have already so infected the Christian community that men begin to feel the pleasure of performing Christlike services for men. This is good. But the pendulum has swung too far. In the outer benefits of Christian deeds we are losing sight of the inner sources which must needs be kept increasingly flowing, if indeed Christian beneficence is not to become semi-mechanical. Already too much of our benevolence is done as though we were doing it. Half the blessing, and that the sourceful half—is thereby lost. He who is the true author of it, is forgotten in our part of the pleasure. Is it not true that our age needs to take more time for the cultivation of that intercourse by which these forces, which are to win and mould the world for God, are developed in our spiritual life? Is not humanity's

advance in material wealth, and intellectual conquest, outstripping its growth in piety and reverence, and those contemplative graces which produce vigorous types of Godliness?

This leads to the consideration of another triad of graces which may be termed ethical, since they spring from holiness —

HOLINESS, PEACE, AND HUMILITY

Like the emotional qualities, faith, hope and love, the ethical graces illustrate the truth that Divine power operating through the believer, though it has a subjective and an objective side, is nevertheless but one force. Holiness is an active, peace a passive, and humility a static force or disposition. Of these powers, holiness is the greatest, (1) because like love, it is an attribute of God; while peace and humility are qualities referable only to finite beings. Peace implies possibilities of danger and anxiety, which are not applicable to the Eternal; and humility, the recognition of a Greater, which is impossible to the Almighty.

(2) Holiness is the source of peace, and of humility, which are reflex and human accompaniments of the positive power.

HOLINESS

Holiness, as the true activity of normal personality, is superlative righteousness. It differs from love as representing the conduct, while love expresses the sentiment of perfect character. This further difference appears between holiness and love. The object of one is a person or persons; the

object of the other, principles. The one regards a person independently of his merit, and loves, pities, and extends mercy or sympathy. The other, governed by ethical principles, independently of the loveliness or otherwise of the person, is righteous, just, and holy, in conduct towards him. Better than any other term the word "holiness" expresses the perfect conduct of perfect manhood. For holiness is essentially conformity to the nature and principles of God.

Now, holiness may not commonly be regarded as the source of peace (as we have shown love to be the genesis of faith), but this much may at least be said, holiness is essential to its possession, for it is written, "There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." Nay more, though we are not accustomed to think of Holiness as the path to peace, yet we ought to. We have no right to peace except as we are, or purpose to be holy. It is when we are "justified by faith" that "we have peace with God" through our Lord Jesus Christ. "He is our peace" because "He is our righteousness." "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Again, in so far as we cultivate the sense of peace independently of personal holiness we harm our spiritual nature. Peace is the normal condition of persons at one with God; and at heart can be possessed only by the saintly. Conscience attests this truth. By divine intent its function is to be a disquieting and reproving power; or an encouraging and endorsing force. As the voice of God it stands for the *right*. And if there be any peace where the

highest course of conduct be not pursued, it is a false possession, the evidence of a hardened heart, and proof of the Spirit's quenching. Accordingly, all soothing of conscience, all administration of spiritual narcotics, is an injurious self-deception that militates against godliness.

Even among the "Born Anew"—the "B. A.'s" of Christian experience—there are two ways of regarding the life of holiness; presenting us with what may be termed two types of holiness. The difference between these however is radical, being the distinction between cause and effect. One class regards holiness as a perfect life, producing peace as its own subjective fruit; the other thinks more of the peace as a desirable possession, and looking for that, cherishes the feeling of piety as a religious emotion, as though the feeling were the thing chiefly to be sought. Among one class is found much converse regarding the desirableness and sweetness of peace. Among the other there is more of an ethical attitude regarding the work of the King, and often a modesty, not to say reticence concerning personal attainments in holiness.

Whilst it must remain forever a mistake to look for fruit, regardless of the root and growth that must precede it, so likewise is it an error not to cultivate taste for, and enjoyment of the fruitage when God has provided it expressly for our felicity here; and as part of our preparation for the hereafter. What duty could be clearer? What need more urgent? Listen to the refrain of the Spirit. "Be ye holy for I am holy." "Be ye perfect even as your

Father which is in heaven is perfect." "Created in righteousness and true holiness." "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Unblamable in holiness." "Holiness without which no man shall *see* the Lord." And if we see Him not, how shall we be changed from glory to glory? How shall we be "like Him," here, or hereafter?

PEACE

Almost universally, peace is regarded as merely a subjective condition, pleasant indeed to the possessor, but exerting no positive power in the world. Yet, without it no one enjoys the sense of strength, nor wears the appearance of power. A perplexed soul needs help. He cannot impart it. What Ruskin said of art is particularly applicable to the Christian life, "I say fearlessly respecting repose that no work of art can be great without it, and that all art is great in proportion to the appearance of it. It is the most unfailing test of beauty, whether of matter or of motion; nothing can be ignoble that possesses it, nothing right that has it not."

The calm which is apparent manifests an unseen force. This truth was personified in the life of Jesus. In His crisis hours it stood forth conspicuously. At the very moment Judas Iscariot was working his shameless mission of betrayal, and fiendish Hebrew conspirators were assembling for His arrest; while the sorrows of Gethsemane were pressing close, and the shadow of the cross was stealing upon Him; our Lord manifested "the peace of God that passeth all understanding," and im-

parted Divine calm to the disturbed disciples. "Peace, I leave with you," said He, "My peace I give unto you." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." There He stood, the burden-bearer of the race; its ruin awaiting His remedy, yet He meets the shock of death and hell unshaken; and promises the same power to others. "My peace I give unto you."

Jesus never worried, never hurried. Incessant activity marked His labours. Throngs pressed upon Him all day long to the distress of His mother and brethren, but the "rush" was in the environment, not in the man. Haste and perplexity were so foreign to Him that the thought of it never comes to us. He personifies the dignity of repose, the peace of power. Once indeed, rapid and vehement speech was accompanied by the lightning-flash of fiery eyes, but that was when Divine indignation resented the irreligious religiousness of over-religious Pharisees. This display of noble wrath, however, serves but to accentuate the normal and powerful repose of His life.

Galilee's tempest may threaten His fragile craft, but He sleeps in perfect security, and imparts to His terrified disciples the secret of His own calm. Later, He said, "I send you forth as sheep among wolves," and "Ye shall be hated of all men," nevertheless "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." In every danger, "Lo ! I am with you." In every darkness, "It is I, be not afraid." Oh, trembling heart, is there strain upon you? He knows all about it.

Have you weakness? He has measured it carefully and declared, "My grace is sufficient for thee." But what about the wicked world? "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." God's peace is not deliverance from trial, but the sense of safety amidst it.

HUMILITY

Meekness or humility, so often regarded as the flower of the graces, is the personal fruit of holiness. Neither a forthgoing aggressive force, nor a receptive power, it rather represents the permanent temper of the inner nature. What is connoted by the word "humility" is the quality of a man's being, as distinguished from his acting or suffering. When we analyze our feelings of veneration for people whom we deem saintly, we find our emotion is excited by the triad of graces now under consideration. It is holiness, peace and humility which clothe a character with saintliness and compel reverence.

That these are God-imparted powers, fostered naturally by fellowship with the Eternal, is a truth attested by the experience of all who have ever been conspicuous for their possession. The meekness of Moses was an acquirement; made after he fled from the court of Pharaoh. Amidst the solitudes of Midian; in contemplation of the steady stars, he held communion with the spirit behind the vastness, and "endured" as seeing Him who is "invisible." So of Isaiah; the same vision of God which imparted to the prophet a feeling of his insufficiency also

dowered him with the all-sufficiency of God. A man never knows himself truly till he knows himself in relation to the Almighty. It is in the experience which thrusts upon us a true sense of our littleness that we feel the Infinite Power above and within us. Humility is therefore a fundamental element of spiritual power. A man cannot be great without it. Ruskin believes that "the first test of a truly great man is his humility." Not that humility implies doubt of power. "All great men," he says, "not only know their business, but usually know that they know it; and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them; only they do not think much of themselves on that account. . . . They have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not in them but through them." Compare Nebuchadnezzar's proud boast "Is not this great Babylon which *I* have built?" with Paul's humble yet sublime declaration, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." Disclaiming all self-glory the great apostle, by precept and example, reveals the source of our sufficiency. Nebuchadnezzar eating grass like an ox warns us of our own insufficiency. God's own Son, the meek and lowly Jesus, who "humiliated Himself" and said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," pronounced the universal beatitude, "*Blessed* are the meek." What a blessing it is for those who have to deal with us if we possess even the earlier stages of this Christian grace! And oh! what blessedness it must be to ripen into that Christlike disposition which

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makes sainthood on earth, and foreshadows the gentleness of heaven.

Holiness, peace, meekness; like faith, hope, love; represent three phases of one power. Each in its several way a force. One active, one passive, one static.

Are there any other spiritual graces? And are they similarly related? Yes. One other and final triad—service, surrender, and self-sacrifice; and these, like those already considered, are but different moments of one force representing the active, passive and personal sides of *volitional* life. *Acting* is a forth-giving of energy. *Suffering* a passive condition. Surrender represents the condition of heart which wills to do or to suffer the will of God; a permanent personal condition.

SERVICE

The Supreme Being—the Father of Spirits and God of the Universe—is more than love, and more than holiness; He is life or power. In sharing His life with human beings He imparts power which, on our part may be spent or withheld according to volition, and therefore represents the self-bestowal of a free being. It may be spent in active ministry, or in passive suffering, or in self-sacrifice even unto death. Of service it concerns us the less to speak because, as we have intimated, Christianity is characterized by beneficence on a scale hitherto unknown to the world. Daily growing richer in all the active graces, our age is brilliant among the centuries for its alleviation of pain and poverty; for its restless

antagonism against ignorance and superstition; and its prosecution of world-wide missions. But what shall be said of the passive virtues? Are we growing as we ought in the exercise of these?

SURRENDER

Volition involves more than activity; it is equally manifest, and often more painfully evident in surrender. In the life of Jesus Christ we behold unremitting, exhaustive, joyous service; doing the will of the Father. Of the toil and weariness we are not unconscious. His sympathy with the sick, His tears for the bereaved, His yearning for the sinful touches us with pathos; but never till He is called upon to surrender His will in suffering does the strain amount to agony. Like our Lord, many of us want to act; we glory in service. It is only when we are laid aside, or defeated in action; called upon to suffer, and be nothing, that we feel the dews of Gethsemane. For most of us it is an awakening, when we come to realize that the prayer, "Thy will be done," may mean "permit me to suffer, if my loss, or my deportment under tribulation, shall accomplish most for the extension of Thy kingdom." For an ambitious spirit, oh! the torture of defeat! (Moses). For an active energetic nature, what pain in imprisonment! (Paul). For a Christian who would fain do great things for God, what a sting in the sense of narrow limitations! Thousands are willing to work, for one who is willing to be but

"A broken and empty vessel,
For the Master's use made meet."

Yet God hath need of heroes in the silence, and shadows, to display His grace by patient endurance; as well as generals to manœuvre dazzling movements in the eye of a gazing world.

SELF-SACRIFICE

Past simple surrender, there is another stage of voluntary yielding. It represents more than quiescence under inflicted pain or defeat. Conscious of what it is doing, it joyfully lays all on the altar; and gives a part of life as a ransom for others, or perchance even the whole life. Jesus gave Himself to the extreme penalty of the cross. And not a few of the heroes whose self-sacrifice has starred the annals of missionary enterprise have gone to the full extent in self-giving. Proverbially the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church. But where the whole of human life is not given, very often a large part of it is quietly and gladly bestowed for Christ's sake. All self-devotion beyond the demands of justice comes under this category. Christian households, as well as home and foreign missions, are strongly characterized by the Pauline sentiment which counts not life dear so long as it accomplishes its ministry. And Christianity is filling the world with the glory of joyous self-sacrifice.

Not so fast I think are we growing in the passive as in the active virtues, yet if a period of persecution should overtake the church we doubtless would have ample old-time exhibition of their presence and power. Even in our soft times of

luxury and security the world is enriched with manifold and increasing self-sacrifice. All beneficent activities involve personal sacrifice. The modern Cræsus gives his millions for some good cause, mayhap without either pleasure or pain, but his suffering affords opportunity for a thousand willing hearts to lay suffering and self on the altar of service. Ours is pre-eminently an age of missions and nurses. But the sick and the dying in any sense can be helped only at the cost of heart's blood, and that flows in our day more freely than money.

The limit to workers in the world's white harvest field is drawn by crippled finance, not by the shrinking of souls. Workers notwithstanding the burden, the pain, and personal cost, are more plentiful than the golden sinews of the warfare. For many of us occasions for painful self-sacrifice may be rarer than in the "killing times" of our fathers, but in a world like ours they will, like "the poor," always be with us. It is in little things, often deemed too trivial to be worth our while, that we fail. For the great things we brace ourselves not forgetful of the cloud of witnesses, and the reputation to be won, but in those minor affairs at home, or with our neighbours, which can by no possibility get into the papers, these we omit, forgetful that "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Nothing touches the world like self-sacrifice. The love, the pain, the heroism it involves appeals to the human heart as nothing else does. From Calvary,

Christ's personal example, to the simple act of a child suffering for another child, it appeals to the divine within us, and stirs it into hunger to possess the same dear quality. And why? Because at the point of sacrifice man and God join in one spirit. Here is the secret of that world-filling force that springs from a martyr's strength. In self-sacrifice is seen the highest exhibition of self-reliance. Paradoxical though it sounds, yet it is true that the supreme type of self-reliance is reliance upon God. Because a self which God is developing is most itself when He is fullest there. Any other kind of reliance must break. It is only when the self is part of the web and woof of the Eternal—a stone in the Spiritual building—that it can possess true self-reliance, for it is then balanced and braced by universal forces.

By service and sacrifice the love of the human race is being increased. Our individual differences on the one hand, and the unity of society on the other, made perfect by each having something to bestow and to receive, bind us together by a thousand various necessities and gratitudes. Thus God enables us to help Him in His work of redemption and of sanctification. The world's largest asset is its noble inheritance of self-sacrifice vested in men and women of Christlike spirit, and of Pauline fibre, whose motto reads, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Every one of these triads—the *emotional* triad, the

ethical triad, and the *volitional* triad—represents a relation between God and man by which a single force of three moments is brought into action by inter-communion. It may be shown also that these three triads hold definite relations to one another, and that these relations are based on the constitution of man. For the character of our spiritual life is revealed by the nature of our *feelings*, the type of our *thought*, and the quality of our *conduct*. Its operation follows the broad divisions of psychology—feeling, thought and volition—and gives cast and character to the whole life. Now the love triad represents personal sentiment towards persons, *i. e.*, towards God and men. The holiness triad represents man's recognition of ethical principles. The volitional trinity exhibits life's bestowal in deed and endurance. If therefore we are pursuing a correct psychology, our classification is exhaustive. True, all virtues are not named in the nine qualities mentioned, but if we examine the "Beatitudes" (Matt. 5) or "The fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. 5: 22, 23) or Paul's list in Philippians 4:8, we shall find there is not a single quality mentioned but is a branch or phase of one of those above dealt with. It is what it is on account of its essential relation to God, and falls into place among these primary qualities as naturally as green in the rainbow falls between blue and yellow, because a blend of these colours. Man has a threefold nature, also he holds a threefold relation of responsibility—to God, to himself, and to his fellow man. Further it must be apparent that every quality he possesses, and every

spiritual power extant, must be what it is on some intelligible principle.

If it be asked what advantage could accrue from an investigation like the above, it may be replied —

(1) That exploration along some such lines must be done, if a scientific method is ever to be carried into the last and highest field of man's experience, and used for the classification and the explication of spiritual phenomena.

(2) It would greatly conduce to giving us a complete bird's-eye view, in its true proportions, of all the principles involved in the mystery of spiritual life.

(3) It would tend to simplify our treatment of the doctrines of theology, and might possibly afford a valuable key to the interpretation of Scripture.

(4) To distinguish between antecedent and consequent, between cause and effect, between what is fundamental and what derivative, and to discern the true relationship between the various spiritual powers, would add to precision of thought—thus advancing spiritual science; and ought to be a mighty aid to the effective presentation of the Gospel—alike from the pulpit and the printed page.

I firmly believe that the illustrations above given afford evidence of an order and method grounded in the essential nature of spiritual life. I am thoroughly convinced that real relations can be traced throughout the whole spiritual realm; that they can be seen in all Revelation; and that they may be applied to the practical explication of religious experience.

To attempt a task so colossal, with implications so far reaching, may be daring on the part of finite creatures. Yet the explanation of mysteries in every lower sphere of knowledge encourages us to hope that God is leading His children with steady step deeper into the sancta sanctissima of our mutual spiritual kingdom. Why should God be less orderly in the highest, than in the lower realms of His operation? If we are ever "to know as we are known," why should we not receive yet fuller preparation here and now for meeting Him face to face? Assuredly our Father desires our complete development as well as our redemption. Every iota of intelligence we possess, every step of advance yet achieved, points in this direction. But if we ought to cultivate expectancy, and lend ourselves to His leading, Inter-communion should be trusted as a means to revelation and growth and power—and contemplation to transformation—for "we shall be like Him," when we see Him as He is. Oh, for the larger faith; and the deeper insight; and the completer surrender to the completing Life!

Salvation is preached (not adequately perhaps) but with gratifying zeal, and glorious consecration. We are filled with an anguish-hunger to save lost souls; but what is not sufficiently felt nor adequately emphasized is the pressing, nay, the insistent need of man's complete development. This must be largely a work of education; of discipline and of inspiration—an over-coming of man's immaturity, and apathy, as well as of his moral perversion. Partly a matter of teaching, it is chiefly a process of

stimulation to thought, and effort, and exercise; a planting of ideals, which are but germinal ideas that continue to grow as soon as they take root. The kingdom of knowledge, and the kingdom of power, like the Kingdom of Heaven, is "within" and "must be *worked out* with fear and trembling." Yet not alone do we labour, "for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." Both God and man are working from within for the same purpose. There is no other way of bringing-out-to-full-life (and that alone is education) a person's powers except by exercising them. We acknowledge this truth from its human side, but alas! God is not regarded as interested in our development. We keep education aside as though it were a human affair in which God had no part.

How many of us worship God as Creator—still busy with the most refractory part of His Creation? Are we not accustomed to think of creation as past? Yet how can it be complete while man, its culmination, is so incomplete? If the new birth is a spiritual creation, and eternal life the product of God's life imparted—in ever growing measure, then the work of creation is still in progress. We need a new prophecy, a truer enlightenment, a larger outlook. The possibilities are as great as man's potentialities. The call is as urgent as it is Divine. It is God's purpose, and sooner or later must arrest universal attention. Assuredly the trend of Christian thought is carrying us in this direction. Let us take a glance into the future.

XX

THE COMING POWER

IN the best sense of the term, we live in "the fastest age of the world." The slow centuries are past. Behind us lie ages of stagnation and barbarism, of superstition and tribal warfare. Those eras too which may distinctively be termed ages of discovery are also gone. There are no more continents to discover, no more seas to explore. Already the whole world is a neighbourhood. A mustard seed of civilization planted in the Tigris valley has spread from Nineveh to Egypt; thence to Greece and Rome; whence it spread to western Europe and America. Now it is flowing back again to the Orient. Not long ago a few small specks represented the total civilization of earth—tiny stars in a sky of indescribable darkness. To-day almost the whole globe is flooded with light. Patches of paganism still remain—extensive indeed—yet mere islands in an ocean of civilization. And the rising tide shall yet "cover the earth with righteousness as the waters cover the sea." Irresistibly are the levers of business, and the leaven of love, informing this inert mass. Speedily there will be in the world only such spots as shall represent deliberate wickedness. The night of the world's ignorance is passing. We are living in an age of education and science, of machinery and invention, of organ-

ized capital, organized industry, and organized charity. Our era approximates universal organization. Before us what? Whither are we tending?

In part our bearings may be taken from the past.

How slowly chaos was transformed to cosmos modern scientific research attests. How patiently the race won its position, and at what cost of blood and struggle, history partly records. But now that the foundations are laid and world organization is nearly complete; now that we see what kind of a superstructure the Supreme Architect was planning; now that the race has come to self-consciousness and its hands are moved by a common sentiment, the way is cleared for a swifter advance. In perfecting commerce and business, in extending credit, in distributing intelligence, in reducing toil and alleviating suffering, more progress was made during the last century than in any ten centuries preceding. The tardy cycles were slow because ignorant and aimless. The rapid age will be swift because direct and purposeful.

If that were all that could be said, it might pre-sage evil. But as we live in the best age—the fruit and product of the past; so the coming age will be but the riper product of a more perfected past; made richer indeed by the toil of *our* hands, the sweat of our “brains,” the agony of our hearts. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” and what it has brought forth is merely what Paul calls “the *first-fruits* of the Spirit.” Continuing he writes, “even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for our adop-

tion, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8: 22-24). In other words, God is getting ready for something more than the redemption of individual souls. Something larger is on the Divine programme, and the whole creation is toilfully urging towards that. Some of our fathers saw this plain enough. The prophets portrayed its meaning and the angels bore their part towards its realization. And now *all* men should feel it. A more buoyant, intelligent, aggressive faith should inspire a heartier response to the call of the Universal Master. Were there no revelation at all, yet the trend of events and the acceleration of the ages should indicate that these are herald eras preparing the way for a higher reign—the more perfect sway of Christ. Had revelation remained forever "a voice crying in the wilderness" alone and unsupported, men might long since have grown discouraged awaiting the Kingdom. But to the voice of the prophets is added the voices of history, literature, science and philosophy. Every stone by the wayside preaches this sermon, every stream babbles the same story; every revolution of the globe reveals more of the growing glowing truth—a better day is dawning.

In this faster, better, culminating day what is the coming force? At one time steam seemed to hold the future. Recently we were assured that congealed air would take a first place among motive forces. Generally electricity is regarded as the coming power. Multitudes believe science holds the key to earth's coming greatness. But neither light nor heat, gravitation nor electricity, neither in-

creased learning, nor accumulating capital will be the coming power. The force that holds the destiny and moulding sway of the future is a spiritual power imparted directly to men by God. It will not displace other forces; it will foster and control them. It will apply every power known to humanity for humanity's welfare. Through that force of forces God's influence will be brought to bear immediately upon all problems.

Singularly, however, this spiritual power is not studied as an intelligible force, holding close relation to, and controlling influence upon, all other forces. The least explored force in the world is that which Jesus distinctly instructed His Church to avail themselves of—a force which has never been much used either by individuals or communities without producing Pentecostal outpouring. Men and capital stand behind every other known force; watching, studying, testing, analyzing, experimenting, to learn first its secret, and then the means of its application. Once nature was thrusting herself upon men; but now man is thrusting himself upon nature. Enough has been achieved already to assure us that we are on the right track. Scientists and mechanicians are coming to their own as explorers, and mean to take full possession of their inheritance. Shall not the prophets and ambassadors of our Lord do likewise with their higher inheritance? If spiritual laws were studied as are natural and psychical phenomena; if faith were explored and tested as electricity is, a new era would burst on the world. Everybody knows that if mechanics were “bungled” as re-

ligion is, not a factory in the world would do its work. If economics were violated as Christianity is, by the very people who profess to further it, the business of the world would fall into confusion.

But every stage must be passed in its own order. What "the process of the suns" has brought us just now is this fascinating problem—already largely solved—and soon to be the sensation of the ages. It scarcely seems like prediction to say that spiritual force will be better understood and more universally applied. God is becoming more visible, audible, and more appreciable every day. Every wave of the inflowing spiritual tide is making men more capable of God. Every year, yea, every hour, is compelling wickedness to become more secret. The avenging angel of intelligence is abroad wielding the sword of the Spirit. Behind it Christian sentiment; above it conscience, and God. The whole world wants safety; the better part of it will have honesty; wickedness can no longer stalk as an open high-handed force. Absolute despotism is dethroned. Christian civilization is *de facto* a herald of liberty—at once the fruit and the seed of higher truth. Evil is fighting a losing battle, God waging a victorious warfare. "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," and hath declared the issue of the present order; for thus saith the Lord God, "Righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the great sea, and every knee shall bow before *Him*." "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (1 Cor. 15: 26).

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As a distant event, we contemplate such a consummation with complacency. But we lose the insistent meaning of this prophet-note of triumph unless we realize that we have a part to play in its denouement.

With spiritual as with physical forces our theoretic conquest is fairly well in hand. What is needed is its fuller development and practical application. Now, it is this personal problem which is of supreme moment for every individual. Exterior forces can be studied from the outside, and the "personal equation" remains a minor element. But in the exploration and application of this innermost force the personal equation is all important. Here the plummet is cast into the profoundest depths of spiritual experience. Soundings can alone be taken when the soul is "hid with Christ in God." To the mystery of the new birth must be added that of the "double indwelling." God in man, and Man in God. Like a vessel sunk in the sea. Each in the other, without loss of personal identity. For man is most himself when God is most in him. Precisely this was the doctrine of the great apostle Paul. "I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me, and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). In other phraseology, "We live and move and have our being in God," or as Jesus Himself expressed it, "Ye in Me and I in you."

But to what end is this co-operation of God's life with the life we call our own? "*That ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.*" "As

the Father hath sent Me, so send I you." "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven," and finally "Greater things than these shall ye do because I go to My Father."

Strange is it not, that while everybody regards the possession of power as a blessing, so few regard its possession as an *obligation*? Yet nothing short of this equals Christ's ideal, or meets the terms of the above commission. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." "Tarry" till ye be "*endued with power*." "Be *strong in the Lord* and in the *power of His might*." "Quit you like men, *be strong*." "My *power is made perfect in weakness*." "He giveth *power* to the faint and to them that hath no might, He *increaseth strength*."

Universally is it felt that history at bottom is the embodiment or realization of the thought of earth's great men. But who can fail to take the next and final step? Are not these great thoughts unfolding the thought of a Higher Power—whose they are and whom they serve? To see man great in history and not to see God great in man is to miss the entire significance of man's noblest achievements—nay, more, is failure to recognize the real force working in the world.

If we gather the sweep of the ages into a phrase or two we shall see that the case stands briefly thus. From nebulous chaos to organic life represents a period immeasurable to imagination. From organic

life to organized society presents an interval equally baffling to human thought. From an organized society to an ideal society must also be a prolonged period. But here is the startling truth. The inhabitants of our planet are to-day grappling with the final problem of the last stage of God's work among men. Moreover we have Divine assurance of certain success. Omnipotence and Omniscience are available. If but a portion of the race are being uplifted from degradation it is because men are not appropriating omnipresent power. Already we have come to see that full life involves full contact with all vitalizing forces—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—partly educational, partly redemptive—and all developmental. What must stir every believing heart and thrill every ambitious soul is the near-certainty of this Divine descent into humanity. Only one thought could kindle finer inspiration, and that is, that every living individual may partake of our Lord's culminating joy and share in the satisfaction of the travail of His soul. But the entrancement of this experience must be obtained through a fellowship whereby God operates through us His glorious, resistless, eternal triumph. In other words, the secret is "inter-communion with God," the key to the transmission of power.

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